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Volume 4

February, 1957

Number 6

NOVELETS

- SMALL LORDS** Frederik Pohl 6
The Earthmen were as giants on this world, and learned very soon what deadly penalties a giant has to pay...
- CHILDREN OF FORTUNE** D. A. Jourdan 20
The fundamental theory — picking the rulers of society by chance alone — was fine, so long as there was no joker in the deck!

SHORT STORIES

- INAUGURATION** Margaret St. Clair 41
The mystery about the President was a mystery to one person only!
- MISADJUSTMENT** Philip K. Dick 46
The worst kind of delusion is one that you can make work!
- BEMA** Wallace West 59
Here's the inside dope on a cliché in science fiction.
- TIME TO STOP** Randall Garrett 78
Here's a vignette that would have been a novelet in the old days.

FEATURE

- SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION (Special Article)**
Richard H. Macklin, Ph. D. 64
Dr. Macklin scrutinizes "The Tie That Binds", and there is — or should be — wailing and gnashing of teeth!

READERS' DEPARTMENTS

- THE EDITOR'S PAGE** Robert W. Lowndes 39
- INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION** Robert A. Madle 73
- IT SAYS HERE (Letters and Comment)** The Readers 79

Cover by Emsb, from "Children Of Fortune"

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Fuller wasn't armed, but he stamped and beat at the Midge as they brought him down..

If a pair of horrid monsters, tall as obelisks, deformed beyond human experience, were rampaging around Levittown or Laguna Beach—how would we deal with them? For that was just about the way Earthmen appeared to the civilized people of this planet around the star called Neighbor. And Cliteman and Morris learned quickly that their relatively tremendous size was their greatest handicap...

SMALL LORDS

Novel

by **FREDERIK POHL**

author of ("Day the Boomer Dukes")

CLITEMAN PICKED his way mincingly along the greenish sands of the beach. It was nearly dark, and that made it bad, because he had to watch where he was stepping. The crazy young ones were just as likely as not to run across his path for a thrill. And if he missed seeing one in the dusk, and stepped on it—

He swallowed and moved closer to the water's edge. It might be best, everything considered, to swim back; but he didn't like the thought of that brackish water in the sores on his back. The foreman had given him an unusually hard time that day—well,

maybe the foreman's wife had given *him* a hard time that morning and he was just taking it out on Cliteman. If the foreman had a wife.

Cliteman stopped at the outskirts of the little village he called Salt Lake City and whistled, as he had learned it was best to do. That greenish, jewel-like lights in the windows of the tiny houses were all on; and the larger, bluer lights in the streets gave Cliteman a pretty good view, even though the light from setting Canopus was rapidly dwindling.

Cliteman saw that one of the midges was waving at him, and he squatted

down The midge was big for its race, very nearly half an inch tall. It stood on two legs like a man; it had two arms like a man, and a head like a man's head. The glossy eyes that covered nearly the whole head were not a man's, of course, and the shrill, piping voice was closer to the stridulations of an insect.

It was waving him away from the village off the beach. Cliteman saw why; there was some sort of gathering on the sands, several hundred of the midges. Without resentment, he waded into the shallows and around the town, though the sting of the water on his scarred legs was extremely painful.

But that wasn't important to Cliteman at the moment. What was important was that he was almost unbearably hungry. If only Morris had found something decent to eat for a changel! A couple of dozen of the big pink shellfish perhaps, or one of those big, six-legged swimming things that tasted faintly of peach-pits. . . .

Splat. Cliteman yelled involuntarily as the biting greenish spark charred a tiny crater in his shoulder. One of the midges was standing threateningly on a rock in his path aiming at him with the glistening small hand-weapons that they used for disciplining the earthmen—or for killing each other as the occasion arose.

Splat. Another spark flared close by, this one only a warning. Cliteman clutched his shoulder and, ever so gently, moved farther out into the water. It was important not to move quickly; the spray a fast-moving foot might kick up was enough to drown a midge.

And that was about all he needed. If he killed one of them, that would be the end of everything. Cliteman vividly remembered what had happened to Fuller when he had crushed one of the little aliens. Quite by accident; but the aliens either didn't know that, or didn't care.

IT WASN'T that they were deliberately cruel in the way they des-

troyed Fuller; or at least, Cliteman thought it wasn't. But these beings were tiny and humans huge; they had only tiny weapons against the gross flesh monoliths from the exploring ship. Death at the hands of the midges was like death from an army of raging termites. It came with a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand little, painful, finally fatal wounds. Perhaps there weren't any good ways to die, Cliteman thought, but certainly there were few that were worse.

As quickly as he could, Cliteman hurried down the brackish sea's shore, each step a carefully planned, meticulously executed problem in engineering. He tried to stay ankle-deep in the water, away from possible wandering midges on the beach, but not so deep that his steps would splash any who might come by. The foot carefully lifted and carefully brought forward; the toe pointed out just so, slipped into the water ahead as delicately as the top liqueur in a *pousse-cafe*.

Just ahead was the little cape the aliens had indicated the human giants might use for their own, free and clear. "Morris!" cried Cliteman. "Hello there!"

No answer; not even the gleam of firelight, where Morris should already have had the fire going, cooking whatever he had been able to turn up in the way of food. Morris was the official provider for the humans, permitted by the tiny aliens to labor only half a day on the crude projects they had assigned the others, so that he might have time to find and prepare the enormous masses of food the giants required. "Morris! Are you there?"

But he wasn't there. Cliteman was alone.

Canopus was down now, and the only light was from the bluish star they called Neighbor. From Earth, Neighbor was only a tiny spot of light—twelfth magnitude or thereabouts—smaller than the 200-inch telescope. But it happened to hang close in space

to the system of Canopus. Though its absolute magnitude was only four or five times the brightness of the sun, it was close enough so that in the night sky it seemed brighter than Earth's moon, bright enough to see by, uncomfortably bright to look at direct.

There was not, however, light enough to make it easy for Cliteman to tend his nets. After half an hour he hauled in his catch; something throbbed and leaped in the purse. He pulled on the long, precious ropes with his mouth watering, it wasn't until he had the net on the sand, maddening empty, that he saw he had neglected to fasten the other end. The prey had escaped; he grimly tied the necessary knots, and cast it out again.

CLITEMAN LAY down on the beach to wait. It was getting chilly—the planet's air was thin. Canopus provided plenty of heat by day, but with the setting of their sun the temperature dropped thirty or forty degrees in as many minutes. The fire was a comfort, but of course it didn't do to make it large—everything on the planet's surface was on a smallish scale; the largest vegetation not much taller than a man. Already in only a few months, they had nearly denuded the little cape that was set aside for them of burnable brush, and there was no way of knowing if the midges would permit them to extend their foraging inland. The trouble was, they couldn't talk to the midges. It was not merely a matter of language, but the auditory range of the little aliens was pitched bat-high; only the sharpest whistles of the earthmen could be heard by the midges—as bass rumbles, no doubt.

Cliteman stared wearily at Neighbor through half-closed eyes. Somewhere about Neighbor, the interstellar ship would be orbiting now, while its scout rockets surveyed the half-dozen planets they had located from space. The ship had been gone six months; it would be gone six months more, at least.

There was a grave doubt in Cliteman's mind that any of them would survive another six months of this.

There had been ten men in the scout rocket that set down on Canopus's 17th planet. Three were dead—Fuller under the weapons of the midges, Breck and Hogarth when the rocket crashed. Morris was sick—it was no charity that made the midges let him have his half-day off; even the tiny aliens could see that the radioman was in bad shape.

And the rest of them were slaves.

Something whistled through the air high overhead—a hundred yards or more. Cliteman instinctively stood up and raised his hand to identify himself. It was a midge flyer, one of the foot long jets that he had seen from time to time on myserious errands, no doubt diverted from whatever course it had been pursuing by the sight of his fire. It circled, with a thin noise like a swinging whip, and Cliteman saw the pattern of colored lights on its dragonfly wings that seemed to be an identification marking. "Take a good look!" he mumbled to himself. He looked more closely himself, and saw that this particular jet was much smaller than others he had seen. It couldn't have been more than three or four inches long, he guessed, as it spiraled down within a few yards of his head. No doubt a one—"man"-ship, to be used for—for—

Cliteman lowered his hands sourly, craning his neck to stare down the shore where Morris should have been coming, but wasn't. He didn't *know* what the midges might use a one-man jet for. Did they have wars? Perhaps; and perhaps a small jet might be a fighter. But it was only a guess, and the chances were extremely good that any guess any of the earthmen might make about the midges was quite wrong. There had been no chance to learn; the scout rocket had come in without orbiting—though no amount of orbiting would have done much good, since no conceivable midge installation would have been visible from space. They had ob-

served nothing in the descent, beyond the bare outlines of the planet's geography; they had crashed in landing, and had stumbled out into an aroused hornet's nest of mighty little warriors.

And from them on, nothing.

THE TINY JET whipped once more around him and shot out over the water. Cliteman touched his sore shoulder with a gentle hand, starting absently after it.

Then he focused his eyes and his attention. Something was floundering in the net.

Dinner! He jumped for the ropes that he and Morris had so painstakingly pieced together and pulled the purse toward shore. Whatever it was that was in the net, it was of a size that promised a full meal! Be damned to Morris, Cliteman thought rebelliously; let him go hungry then! He carefully jockeyed the net into the shallows, and in Neighbor's blue-white light he saw the thrashing sea-creature's struggles break the surface of the water. He played it as any angler plays a trout, fully concentrated, aware of nothing but his net and his prey. . . .

Disastrously aware of nothing; for disaster came.

He heard, a little too late, the deeper, slower whistle of the jet again. He looked up a little too late, and saw it settling down toward the water, close inshore, just beyond his net.

The jet's tiny pilot was landing!

Cliteman pulled frantically at the ropes; then dropped them. Too late! The jet seemed to falter and swerve, as though the pilot had at least seen the treacherous snarl of ropes, and the leaping sea-creature in the water before him. Too late! The tiny aircraft had already touched its narrow keel to the water; it bounced on one cord and spun around another; it plowed into the tangle of the net itself and flipped over.

Cliteman, panicky, leaped knee-deep into the water and clutched at the doll-sized air-craft. He roared and jerked his

hands away; stupid of him to have touched the jet exhaust! He grasped it gently around the middle of the fuselage and lifted it, held it in his hand, staring. It was impossible to see the pilot in only the light from Neighbor; in a moment he brought it to the fire and set it down on a little rock, and knelt to peer inside the little transparent hatch.

The pilot was inside, all right; but motionless. Unconscious, perhaps, or dead.

In either case, there was no doubt in Cliteman's mind that he was in trouble.

- 2 -

MORRIS LIMPED slowly toward the reservation.

He was hungry, in spite of the wearing, burning pain in his chest that had been getting worse ever since the rocket crash; and he was bone-tired. His whole back was a pattern of new scars as well; it had taken quite a few applications of the midge's weapons before he understood that this day was not like all the other days, that this day the midges did not intend to permit him to leave his work half-way through the day. The scars were the penalty he had to pay for not understanding; but it didn't make them less painful.

Besides, there would be trouble with Cliteman, Morris knew with resignation. How close to the beast they had all returned! Take the case of Sanford Cliteman, lieutenant in the Space Force, respected citizen, loved husband and father of two. Morris had played many a game of chess with Cliteman on the way out, the lieutenant had been a skilled opponent, generous in victory, good-natured in defeat.

Yet, what about the time three days before when Morris had torn the net and there had been no dinner ready for Cliteman? The man's anger had been animal—and Morris himself had flared

into anger in response; the two of them had come close to a fist-fight. Animal!

But how could they help it? They were treated as beasts, mindless prime movers suitable for clearing land for the strange midge farms, or for scrabbling at the earth to make culverts and irrigation ditches. If they offended, they were given a beast's punishment, a touch of the whip. If they served well, they got a beast's reward, to be turned loose at sundown—free to feed and sleep. That was the greatest gift the midges ever gave.

"Why? Morris demanded, puffing and holding his bad leg as he limped along. It seemed impossible that the midges should not realize they were intelligent, highly civilized beings. They had seen the rocket; they could not imagine beasts could create or man such a machine. But there was simply no sign of an attempt at communication.

IN THE FURY of the first fight, the earthmen had been completely off guard. The rocket had crashed; that put an end to the book's rules about first contact on an alien planet. They had stumbled out of the wreck, mostly unharmed, mostly hurt or shaken up. They had been greeted with fire from the midge hand weapons, and even more serious fire from what might have been the equivalent of self-propelled artillery. Well, maybe they should have reacted quicker, Morris thought; they could have stuck together, leaped back into the rocket in spite of the threat of fire and explosion, armed themselves, fought off the aliens. But in the split second when that was still possible they had wavered.

Carrasquel had drawn his gun and begun return fire; but the equation one bullet—one midge did not balance to the advantage of the earthmen. Undoubtedly Carrasquel had killed a few, but what was the use of killing a few—or a hundred—or a thousand? Ful-

ler hadn't had a gun, but he had stamped at them as though they were insects. It was Fuller the midges destroyed, in cold blood, while he lay in helpless anguish under the shock of their concentrated fire. Concentrated, that was it; the midges had leaped into action, each group fixed firmly on a target; the humans in their surprise had blundered and scattered. And they never had really got together again. The midge tactics had evidently been to keep them apart, for the fire was most punishing when any two of the earthmen tried to come together....

And now there was Cliteman and himself, who had been driven miles and miles across country, under the stings of the pursuing midges in their vehicles and their aircraft. He knew where Carrasquel and Boehm were, because he'd chanced to see Boehm and they'd been able to shout to each other for a moment; the others he hadn't even seen in months.

But if only the midges had waited... if only the midges had tried to make contact, come to appreciate that earthmen were their superiors, in any imaginable scale of intellectual values....

But come to think of it, Morris told himself dourly, that was no longer so very true.

MORRIS LABORED around the little hill that went down to the water and saw Cliteman fiddling with something on the ground. There was no smell of cooking fish; there was something wrong. "Cliteman, what's the matter?"

The lieutenant jumped up, startled, his eyes wild. Then he saw who it was. "Oh, Morris. This damn midge—Where the hell have you been? I've been starving—Never mind that. Look what I've got here!"

Morris looked, and opened his eyes, and looked again. He whispered, "Sweet love of heaven!"

"What am I going to do?" Cliteman demanded. "Look at the damn things,

Morris. They're hurt! They might be dying, for all I know."

"They?"

Cliteman said bitterly, "Three of them; three little midges, out for a little excursion. Momma Midge and Poppa Midge and Little Bitty Baby Midge—I guess. And what do you think they'll make of that, Morris? I've been sitting here trying to make up my mind to chuck them back in the drink."

"No, Cliteman!"

Cliteman stared at him woodenly for a second. "Remember Fuller?" he asked after a moment.

"I know, Cliteman, but—"

"They'll think I killed them! And how do I know? Maybe I did. If I hadn't been pulling in the net just when they landed their stinking plane it would have been all right! But here they are, and do you know what comes next, Morris? Because I don't!"

Morris lowered himself gingerly to the ground—something he was reluctant to do, because it wasn't always easy getting up again. "Shut up a minute," he ordered, and looked closely at the midge plane.

There were three of them in it, all right. Two stirring faintly, one motionless. Dead? Morris had no idea. They all had their eyes open, but as far as Morris or Cliteman knew, midges had nothing to close their eyes with; neither of them had ever seen one blink. The transparent canopy was smashed open. Apparently, Cliteman's first frantic idea was to get the three of them out of the plane, but once he'd opened the canopy he hadn't dared touch them.

Morris stared dazedly at the tiny machine. It was a beautifully made child's toy; any kid on earth would have given his chance of immortality for one like it. Three inches long, five inches from wingtip to where the other wingtip would have been if it hadn't been crumpled flat. It was still in working condition except for the wings and the canopy—at any rate, tiny

red and purple lights winked on what might have been the instrument panel, and something that Morris couldn't see was making a faint, high-pitched hum.

Morris propped himself on an elbow and ventured to touch one of the midges with a delicately questing finger. It moved slightly, but whether it was cold to the touch, or warm he couldn't have said.

He noticed silvery threads and rods, so small they were almost invisible, tangled in a little heap on a flat rock beside the ship. "What's that?"

Cliteman took a deep breath. He sounded a little more human as he said: "I don't know. I thought they might be—well, radio antennas or something. I broke them off, Didn't want them calling for help."

Morris shook his head. Cliteman cried: "Don't tell me I shouldn't have done that! Maybe I shouldn't have, but—curse it, Morris, I was scared! Don't forget Fuller."

MORRIS SIGHED. He said wearily, "I'm hungry," and pushed himself to a sitting position, still looking at the little plane. "They kept me working till dark," he said absently. "I guess they decided I'm well enough to put in a full day's work now. Or maybe that I'm not well enough to be worth pampering—might as well work me to death. I don't suppose you caught anything to eat?"

"Morris, don't you see what trouble we're in?"

Morris looked at Cliteman soberly. "They'll blame us for sure!" Morris noted that it was "us" who had become responsible for what had happened to the midge plane. "Look, Morris, the way I see it there are only two things we can do. One, we can get rid of it—sink it in the ocean, and hope they never find it. Maybe they won't. Maybe they won't connect us with what happened to the plane."

"And maybe they will," said Morris.

"All right, they will," Cliteman agreed. "Sure, why kid ourselves? So that only leaves one thing. It's time for us to make our break, Morris. Like we talked about. We'll cut straight across country till we find that big river and stay right with it. It can't be more than ten miles. We won't miss the rocket, it's too big. What do you say, Morris? We've been planning to do it anyhow as soon as you were feeling better. Well, this just moves the date up. We can't wait. It's too big a risk, Morris; remember Fuller. What about it? If we—"

"Shut up." Cliteman blinked and stared. "No, *shut up!*" Morris sat straight, peering at the sky. It wasn't anger that had made him tell the lieutenant to shut up, although he felt something that came close to anger.

He had heard something.

He listened; the two of them listened.

They heard it, and then in a moment they saw: The faint whistle, the patterned lights of a midge jet circling overhead.

- 3 -

"**A**CT BUSY!" cried Cliteman; "Start putting wood on the fire!"

He himself leaped toward the net, where the neglected fish-thing was feebly flapping away what remained of its strength. He drew it in while Morris laboriously got to his feet and fed the fire. Cliteman grasped the slippery creature, reckless of possible teeth or stinging spines. He bashed it expertly against a rock and then took a closer look at it. It was tentacled, not much over a foot long and plump as a frog's belly. Cliteman quickly skewered it on a gnarled stem of green wood and handed it to Morris to broil.

"But you didn't clean it!" Morris

protested. "We can't eat this without—"

"Cook it! We aren't going to eat it, you idiot. Just look busy until that damn plane goes away."

Cliteman glanced warily up. It was still there, perhaps not as close, but well within the range of the sound its jets made. He swore under his breath, looked around undecidedly, and settled on adding more fuel to the fire. He bent down for branches, and abruptly jumped up as though he had seen an adder. "What's the matter?" Morris demanded, startled.

"That thing!" Cliteman's voice was shaky. He was staring at the wrecked midge flier on the ground before him. He darted a quick look over his shoulder then jumped toward it, obviously intending to stamp it into the ground.

"Wait!" screamed Morris; blocking Cliteman's path.

Out of the way!"

"No, Cliteman! You'll kill them!"

"You're damn well told I'll kill them.

We're crazy to leave that thing in plain sight. Those others will come back any minute, and if they see it, wham! We're done for, man!"

"Wait!" ordered Morris in a totally different voice, a voice of command.

Cliteman stopped and stared.

Morris said tightly; "It's murder. I won't let you do it."

CLITEMAN stood poised, and his eyes were hard on the limping man. He held the twisted stick of firewood in his hand. For a moment it seemed that the stick would be a club, to strike at Morris; but there was a nearing whistle and a fleck of light that darted about their heads. Both men jumped. They had forgotten the midge jet, but the jet had not forgotten them. It came swooping in on them like an earthly plane circling living pylons; and if there had been a chance that the jet had missed seeing the wrecked craft before, that chance was gone.

Perhaps it had been only curiosity that made the midge pilot come close to the quarreling Titans; perhaps he had caught a glimpse of the wreck. Whatever, it did him in; for the stick that might have been a club became a flyswatter; Cliteman swung, as quickly as thoughtlessly as a polar relay, and slapped the prying midge plane out of the air. There was a faint ringing crunch as the tree-trunk hit the plane, and a distant hiss and tiny crack as the plane slammed into the water and exploded; and that was the end of that.

"Now we are in for it," said Cliteman after a moment. And, after a moment more, "I'm sorry."

Morris only shook his head. It was late to be sorry. "Clean that fish, will you?" he said.

"Clean— What?"

"That fish," said Morris irritably. "Or whatever it is. We're going to have to eat it, you know. We're going to have a long night ahead of us."

He turned his back on the other man and bent to look at the crashed midge flyer that had started the trouble.

They were alive after all, he saw absently; all three of the occupants were moving and one of them was chirping excitedly. Not that it mattered to Morris, not any more. . . .

Picture a pair of horrid monsters, obelisk-tall, deformed beyond human experience, rampaging about Levittown or thundering in the surf at Laguna Beach. Picture them dropped from space in a queer, enormous vessel the like of which no man had ever seen, their voices a quivering diapason that hurts the ear and shakes the spine. Picture them feasting on whale sharks or such enormous offal from the sea, quarreling among themselves, and striking out to clout an airliner in ruins from the sky.

It is no wonder, thought Morris, that the midges don't want us around.

But if the positions had been re-

versed—would we have at least have tried to communicate?

But—if the positions had been reversed—would we have allowed the monsters to live at all?

Morris sighed, and blew on the chunk of greasy flesh he was holding, and forced himself to eat.

The two men ate in silence. Above them, and outward to the sea, there was a clustering swarm of midge aircraft, not approaching, but observing every move. They had begun to arrive within minutes after Cliteman had struck at the midge plane. They were waiting for something.

Whatever it was it couldn't be long in coming.

"Hurry up!" Cliteman grumbled hoarsely. Morris nodded but didn't answer; there wasn't much to say.

THEY HAD planned for a month, and the sum of their planning was this; Someday they would make a break for the rocket. It would not be impossible, for between them and the spot where the rocket had crashed lay dense brush—towering jungle, by midge standards; it would be hard for the little creatures to bring much force to bear against them. On the other hand, it would not be very fruitful, for the rocket had crashed. As a plan, it had only one real advantage; it was better than nothing.

It would have been better, thought Morris with detachment, if we could have waited until I was stronger—until the ship returned from Neighbor, and maybe another rocket might come down—until the chances were somehow better. . .

But that was exactly what was no longer possible. For there was no doubt that whatever the earthmen's status with the midges had been, the destruction of the plane had changed it for the worse.

"Morris! What the devil's that?" Cliteman was pointing.

Something bright and fast was glid-

ing toward them in the water. It was long—six or eight feet, easily—but not very wide. It looked rather like a mechanized small canoe, with a row of lights and brighter lights fixed forward.

Hiss, *splat*. A fat blue spark leaped from the prow of the thing toward them, fell short and sizzled in the water.

"I didn't know the midges had battleships," said Morris in amazement, and then shook himself. "Come on; let's get out of here!"

"Hold it!" Cliteman caught him by the shoulder, his eyes huge and fearful as he stared down the beach. In the pale light from Neighbor it was hard to see what was going on. But once again there were lights, hundreds of them it seemed; they dipped and bobbed and joggled and came on. Morris saw at last what the lights belonged to. They were wheeled machines—not earthly wheels, thin in proportion to their diameter, but constructed like flabby steam rollers, creeping forward on rubbery cylinders. There were scores and hundreds of them. Tanks? Something very like tanks, at any rate; in a moment they opened fire, too, and the giants from earth were caught in a criss-cross of flying sparks. "*We're cut off!*" cried Cliteman. "*Run!*"

But it was a little late to run.

A fat blue spark caught Cliteman on the shoulder and spun him around, yelling. Morris dropped to the ground as another hissed past him, and he could smell the dry, chemical bite of ozone in his nose, taste the metallic eddy-currents in his teeth. "They can see us in the firelight!" Cliteman yelled, and began to kick furiously at the little campfire. Burning sticks scattered into the brush, sparks flew up from the fire—redder, milder sparks than those that came from the midge weapons, but sparks that could burn all the same.

The fire from the midge tanks on the beach came in thick volleys now, and it was impossible that all of them should miss. These were no mere beesstings like the hand weapons, Morris

discovered; he yelled, holding his arm, as he discovered it. A couple of shots from these heavy weapons could easily kill.

He lifted his head. "We've got to get out of here! Look!" The flying brands from the fire had not conveniently gone out; the brush was beginning to blaze.

"It'll give them something to think about," Cliteman snarled, and plunged toward the mainland, bobbing and weaving and yelling. It was miraculous that he wasn't struck down by the massed fire from the beach—yet perhaps not so miraculous, for what human gunners could have kept their heads in the face of a charging, bellowing monster a tenth of a mile tall? He got free, Morris following, and in a moment they were in the momentary shelter of the deep brush inland. Behind them, yellow flames and floating sparks rose up toward the bright night sky; ahead was only darkness.

MORRIS LEANED against a twelve-foot tree, panting hoarsely. "What—what next?" he gasped, fighting for breath.

Cliteman breathed a long, shuddering sigh. "What do you think? We'll try for the rocket, and then—" He stopped, hesitated, swore and said roughly, "Come on!"

Morris limped painfully after. And then? *Idiot question*, he thought wearily; there isn't any "and then". They might make it to the rocket and they might not; but whatever happened, there was no future for them.

He paused to catch his breath. Apart from the din Cliteman made pounding through the brush ahead, it was quiet in the woods. The blue-white light from Neighbor filtered down through the leaves. There was a sighing, whispering noise behind him that might have been the fire they left, and might have been the wind; he didn't turn his head to look. He didn't even look up at the distant overhead whistling that, beyond

doubt, was the sound of midge jets looking for them. They would be hard to spot in the brush—at least until daylight.

Resolutely, he didn't think beyond daylight.

Cliteman was getting pretty far ahead. Morris stood up. He spread his fingers for a moment, and glanced at the little wrecked midge plane. It had been a foolish impulse to pick it up from the sand beside the fire. It might have been safe enough there; the little creatures would have been cooked alive. But were they any safer with him? He glanced at them; they were still moving, at least. Perhaps he should put them on the ground and leave them, he thought. . . .

But he didn't. In a moment he closed his fingers over the tiny ship and limped after Cliteman.

- 4 -

MORRIS WAS sitting at his instrument board, transmitting the news of their arrival to Earth. He was well fed, well rested, his wounds entirely healed; the Earth signals were coming through, giving landing instructions and congratulations to the whole crew. Things were fine. The only little flaw was that, for some reason, the rocket motors of the ship were coughing explosively, jarring him, making it hard to receive the faint signal from Earth. . . .

"Wake up, Morris!"

He sat up with a start and looked around.

No radio instruments, no ship, no signals from Earth.

He was half propped against a tree, in the woods, and a soft rain was filtering down through the leaves overhead. Sharp coughing explosions were coming from somewhere nearby. The rockets? Then he remembered. No, not rockets. It was midge flyers, dropping their little missile-bombs, stabbing into the

unseen ground beneath the tree-tops, trying to connect with Cliteman and himself. None of them were coming very close—but the midges had plenty of bombs.

Morris coughed raspily and stood up. Cliteman was grumbling, "It's getting light. Do you see the rocket?"

Morris bent and retrieved the little midge ship. The three occupants were still moving—more weakly, he thought.

Something was glittering, out beyond the fringes of the dense wood. Perhaps a quarter of a mile away, catching light from setting Neighbor, washed out by the beginning glow of Canopus itself.

"Is that it?" . . .

"No, you idiot! Can't you see it's moving?" Cliteman muttered to himself, pacing back and forth, staring out. The younger man was pretty near collapse, Morris judged. That made two of them. He squinted at the glittering thing. It was moving, all right—well, that ruled out the possibility of its being the rocket. But what was it? Something low to the ground and metallic, crawling back and forth in an open stretch. Large, as midge standards went—a yard or more long. Perhaps it was some sort of agricultural machinery, gang-plows, sowers, whatever the midges used. The small community where Morris had been a forced laborer had had nothing like it; but, of course, he hadn't seen anything like enough of the midge civilization to judge what technological heights it might attain.

He glanced up, and saw the glimmer of midge jets circling about. The distant cough of the little bombs seemed to come mostly toward the west, in the direction of setting Neighbor; and looking at the patterned jets, Morris realized that most of them were over there too. Now, why should they think we're over that way? he wondered.

And then he knew.

"Cliteman! If you were a midge,

where would you expect us to head for?"

Cliteman scowled fretfully. "How the devil do I know? Oh—toward the rocket, I guess. Where else is there?"

"Nowhere else, Cliteman! So—they're probably concentrated around the rocket. And if you'll look at those jets—"

Cliteman looked surprised, then merely worried again. "You're right, I suppose. Well—let's try that way. God knows we won't be any worse off, even if we don't find it!"

BUT THEY did.

They had to pay a price, because the midge jets were thick as wasps about a nest, but in the glimmering, pre-dawn light they saw the looming tail-rockets of their scout towering over the trees that lay between.

They paused for just a second to catch their breath, then Cliteman bellowed: "All right, let's get going!" And he lumbered out of the shelter of the woods, Morris limping and scuttling along behind him.

It was a matter of seconds only, and then the midge aircraft had them spotted. *Thank God*, thought Morris with a part of his brain as he ran, *thank God they don't seem to have guns on the jets!* But the little buzzing craft came racing in at them as though they intended to ram, swerving off at the last moment, dropping little rice-grain objects that spun and crashed like tiny firecrackers—but louder and more dangerously than any firecrackers that Morris had ever seen.

Cliteman was roaring and flailing his arms as he ran; perhaps that helped, for the midge jets could have come closer still, and then they would not have missed. As it was they veered away short, and though the tiny bombs made ant craters fly up all about the running feet of the earthmen, and the pelting sand from the blasts stung their bare flesh, there were no direct hits. The attackers

buzzed by in squads and formations and several of them made Morris duck fearfully as, Kamikazelike, they swooped in directly at his head. That would be no mere wound, the things, small as they were, had the speed and impact of a bullet. But if the pilots had intended to ram, they missed, or changed their minds; and the two men were untouched all the way across the wide sandy field with its fuzzy little growth of midge crops—

And there was the rocket.

"Hurry, hurry!" cried Cliteman over his shoulder, and Morris tried to respond:

For the midges were waiting:

Ranked about the rocket were little squares of midge troops, or police, or whatever it was in the midge race that fired electric cannon at invading earthmen. Even a dozen yards away, Morris could hear the thin cheeping as the midges caught sight of them and prepared to open fire. *Splat! Splat-splat-splat-splat!* A burst of the searing little sparks clustered about Cliteman's head and shoulders; he roared, for though most had near misses, the one that connected had brought agony with it. He stumbled and half-fell against the open port of the rocket. *Splat!* Apparently it was hard for the midge gunners to bring their pieces of bear on a moving target, even so huge a one as an Earthman; for the next burst stained the sides of the rocket itself. Cliteman leaped and struggled and made it inside.

LURCHING after him, Morris caught confused pictures of the rocket. There had been changes! Up against the hull of the rocket there was a shiny, spiraling ramp—not to the main port, that the humans used, but to a neat, square-cut hole, burned out of the hull by the looks of it. *Of course, of course*, Morris told himself fretfully, running and dodging and panting, of

course the midges wouldn't have left it alone! Would we left such a thing alone if it had landed in New York? No doubt the rocket had swarmed with the little things since the first moment after they landed—

And what damage they might have done inside Morris didn't bother to speculate. It didn't matter; they couldn't move the rocket, couldn't escape by flying away—and lacking that it didn't matter how terrible a fight they put up, or what weapons they could contrive from the blasters and hand-guns they might find. One of them was more than a million midges in mass, but they were outnumbered not by millions but by billions....

And then there was no more time for thought.

The midge gunners had found the range, and he was stung by a thousand flaming sparks. Only hand-weapons so far, but he had already seen that even the hand-weapons could kill. They had killed Fuller, months before, and they might kill him now. He screamed and jolted forward, swerving and bobbling, and if anything saved his life it was the appearance of Cliteman at the door of the rocket, drawing part of the fire. For a moment Morris thought dazedly that Cliteman had come to his rescue, but only for a moment. He saw Cliteman's dancing, convulsing body, and knew that—of course, of course!—there had been midges even inside the rocket, waiting!

But even so—it was better inside the rocket than out. For outside it was plain death.

Morris plunged toward the door as Cliteman was plunging out. They collided and fell.

Morris jolted to the ground, and the breath left him. So this was the end, he thought wearily. Well, let it come—

But something was nagging at him.

He remembered what he was carrying, what he held in his hand all though the long fight, protecting it, try-

ing to find the right place and the right time to put it down.

The wrecked midge flyer!

The tiny figures inside still moved, he saw, and he was glad. With almost the last of his strength, the maddening blue sparks charring him by inches, he stretched out his hand and opened the fingers, gently—about to set the flyer on the ground.

And then his fingers closed on it again.

Morris sat up, staring at the little machine. Heedless of the scorching fire from the midge weapons, heedless of the doing, singing jets overhead.

The pain no longer mattered. It was a fact of life, and there was nothing he could do about it. He put it out of his mind.

Morris set the midge flyer on the ground. He stood up, raised his huge foot over it, brought it down—fast, hard, brutal....

And stopped. The foot, huge as Cheops's tomb above the little flyer, halted and hovered, while the tiny creatures inside stared up with huge eyes.

Morris pulled back his foot. Slowly, solemnly, he shook his head—"no" to the left, "no" to the right.

He bent, picked up the flyer again, set it carefully away, and slumped to the ground.

Lord help us, he thought, Lord help us, that's all I can do—

And then he closed his eyes, and waited for the pain to end, with the end of all pain that is dying.

BUT DEATH didn't come.

There was an agony and a fiery burning, but not death. It was hard to tell if there were new wounds falling on Morris's revaged back, or only the endured pain of the old ones. There was pain, all right; but bearable pain—not the cruel, killing pain that Fuller must have felt, that Morris had expected.

He opened his eyes.

The massed weapons of the midges were ranged on him; but they weren't firing.

He looked around. Overhead the midge flyers swooped and whistled; but they weren't dropping their destructive small bombs.

Morris raised himself on his arms, fearing to hope, hoping for an end to fear. Beside him, Cliteman's incredulous voice said: "They aren't shooting at us!"

It was true. And there before them both was the answer.

The little flyer that Morris had so carefully carried, so carefully set out of harm's way. There was no one in it now; but one tiny midge sat painfully on the ground beside it, looking up at them.

If the flat, huge-eyed face wore an expression, Morris couldn't read it. But what he could read beyond question was the fact that the other two were gone—to the midges manning the guns, beyond doubt. Gone to tell them that—that—

"Why, they must have told the others we meant no harm," whispered Cliteman, and looked wonderingly at Morris.

Morris nodded slowly.

Cliteman pulled himself painfully to his feet. "Morris the Destroyer," he breathed, and there was no irony in his tone. "Morris the Giver of Life. You showed them we didn't want to kill, and they understood."

He helped Morris to his feet, and the two of them stood regarding the slowly-advancing midges, now with their weapons turned to the ground.

"I'm glad," said Cliteman; "I'm glad you took such good care of the three in the plane."

- 5 -

EXECUTIVE Officer Yardsley, favoring his bandaged and splinted arm, squinted at his desk calculator and announced: "We're

in an orbit that'll hold us for a while, I guess. Any word from the landing party?"

"I'll check with the radio room," said the Officer of the Deck, and dialed its combination on the intercom.

Yardsley leaned back, patting the bandages on his arm. Outside the view-screen, bright Canopus blazed at them. It had been a rough trip, complicated with hostile inhabitants on the planet of the star called Neighbor. He was entirely ready for the long, peaceful trip back to earth, as soon as they collected the crew of the scout rocket that had gone down to look over the Canopan planet—it couldn't be too long or too peaceful for Executive Officer Yardsley. He had made the mistake of volunteering for the landing party on the planet that circled Neighbor; and when the aborigines turned out to be large green anthropoids with Stone Age culture and surly tempers, he had been one of those who had been on the receiving end of the slung stones that greeted them.

The O.O.D. was listening with considerable interest to whatever it was the radio room had to report, Yardsley noted. At last he said, "Good-oh, thanks," and hung up.

"Well?" demanded Yardsley.

"Oh, they've had a ball," the O.O.D. told him, grinning. "The radio room just established contact, and they haven't got the whole story yet. But enough. They had a little trouble at first, but now they've established contact with the native population. Civilized, Yardsley—got machines, aircraft, everything. And, oh, yes—they only average about half an inch high!"

"Half an inch high," repeated Yardsley, remembering the green anthropoids. He sighed. "Wouldn't you know it? I had a free choice—I could have gone with them, or I could have landed on Neighbor. Just my luck to pick the one that was *dangerous*."



The citizen picked up a stone, very reluctantly.

In a world where the rulers were picked by chance, war had been truly outlawed, for any man might become one of the Fortunate — that is, if the Fortunate were really picked by chance!

CHILDREN OF FORTUNE

Novel of Worlds To Come

by D. A. JOURDAN

(author of "Change Of Color")

illustrated by Freas

TRYL MOVED with awe in his skin-soft plastic sandals over the rare marble of the palace floors. Like other citizens, he had seen reproductions of the dwellings of the Fortunate; but no picture had prepared him for the sense of peace conferred by this vastness of unused space. Always, among the citizens of the 25th century, life was teeming, hectic.

The servant woman, who, accompanied by the six-man palace guard, had been leading him along a wide hall stopped finally beside a broad, carved, double doorway. She opened one of the doors, gestured him to enter.

Inside Tryl hesitated; the door beside him thudded softly shut. Though the room was airy and cool, Tryl, sensing that he was alone in the presence of a member of the Fortunate, started to sweat.

"If you're going to faint," the voice

was a girl's and it was divided between amusement and annoyance, "you'd better come over here to the bed. Our floors are unyielding and I shouldn't want anything to happen to you until I've tested your vaunted talent."

Under the sarcasm; Tryl found himself regaining his poise. He moved toward the luxurious, curtained bed. Dmen, his best friend had, always insisted that the Fortunates were no different from ordinary human beings.

"I'll try not to faint," Tryl said; "but please remember that I have never even seen a member of the Fortunate, much less treated one..."

"I know. Blame it on this special ability you're said to have." The small, brownhaired girl in the rumpled green overall eased herself higher on her pillows, in order to see him better. She grabbed at the icebag on her head, just as it started to slide off, and

looked at Tryl doubtfully. "I suppose this is a mistake on my part," she admitted. "You probably won't be able to help me any more than the doctors, and you'll probably never again be contented as a result of this exposure to the Fortunate."

"I may even," Tryl suggested wryly, "find myself contracting headaches in an effort to imitate you..."

The girl looked at him. "Are you making fun of me?" She sounded incredulous. "It would not be pious for an ordinary citizen to make fun of a Fortunate," she warned.

"I could never make fun of anyone in pain," Tryl replied, gently.

"Well, I *am* in pain!" The girl sat up suddenly, ignoring the sliding ice-bag. She flung her body violently forward until her tangled brown hair rested on her knees. "Do something!"

Exactly as he would have done for any ordinary citizen with a headache, Tryl made her lie back and proceeded to stroke her temples. And the girl, like any other person in pain that Tryl touched, knew relief, promptly fell asleep. Tryl smiled inwardly at the thought of Dmen's triumph at this further vindication of his theory—that the Fortunate were physically and mentally no different from citizens.

For one moment, looking down at the pretty relaxed face under the dishevelled hair Tryl had a fleeting desire to kiss the girl's slightly-parted lips. Then, shocked at how far he had come from the almost superstitious awe with which he had first approached his unique assignment, he hurriedly backed away from the bed and let himself out through the double door.

THE SERVANT woman rose from a bench near the door and came over to Tryl. The six-man palace guard stood quietly by, alert as so many dogs—and, Tryl guessed with approximately the same degree of intelligence. The woman said, "My mistress wants something?"

Tryl studied her incurious face. Dmen had said that not only congenital feeble minded were used as servants to the Fortunate. He claimed that when there were not enough low intellects—or when some special service was required—the Fortunates did not hesitate to induce the limited mentality that was requisite for their servants. It would be terrible if it were true. Tryl said, "Your mistress wants only to sleep; when she wakes, she will feel better."

Again—this time even more fearfully—accompanied by the guard, Tryl followed the woman thru the palace. He was finally returned to the Island Security Department, the usual combination of prison and hospital.

But here, what he most dreaded—that they should subject him to treatment of some kind—did not happen. Almost before he was able to realize his unbelievable good luck, he was quickly and efficiently returned from the fabulous beauty of the Island of the Fortunate to his own meager niche in the filthy, drab metropolis of Tole. He was dazed with the narrowness of his escape.

The instant he opened the door to the apartment-dormitory he shared with seven other men, he was yanked inside; and before the door had closed behind him, he was enfolded in a rib-cracking embrace. "You're back!" Dmen exulted. "Alive!"

For the first time, Tryl allowed himself to realize what a tremendous adventure he had been through. "Why aren't you at dinner," he reproved Dmen. "Did you imagine going hungry would bring me back the more surely?" He mocked gently, "Is this some sort of sacrifice, such as your ancient sects might have offered?"

Dmen burst out laughing. "And now I know it's the same you!" he said, clapping Tryl on the back. "They haven't harmed you, thank Fortune!" He stopped suddenly, shook his head in confusion. "Habit," he muttered

angrily. "But I don't believe in it!"

Automatically Tryl glanced toward the closed door. Though the piety of the people necessarily varied, the worship of Fortune was worldwide and government ordained. But Dmen had he had long since decided that the authorities could not watch every man constantly for impiety; their greatest danger would not be any of the dreaded automatic watching devices, but a human enemy.

Tryl said uncertainly, "I don't understand it myself. Why they allowed me to retain the memory of contact with a member of the Fortunate..."

Dmen's grey eyes narrowed in disbelief. "Are you trying to tell me that you know what happened? That you can recall the experience?"

"I'll never forget it," Tryl said remissly.

Dmen frowned. "But no one is permitted to retain the memory of any contact with the Fortunate—not even the go-betweens who carry their orders. The memory is always removed. Why should they make an exception of you?"

"Doctor Flag must have told them about me. And though he hasn't said anything to me, I think he suspects that it isn't just by touching people that I get my results. He probably warned them that fooling with my mind in any way might impair my peculiar ability..." He grinned at Dmen, felt his own ribs gingerly. "So will you please try to remember I'm a fragile flower? And handle me gently?"

Dmen ignored his baiting. "They wouldn't have allowed you on the island—near 'em—without first submitting you to examination to assure themselves you hadn't—say, turned yourself into a human bomb, or a germ disseminating station.

"That they did," Tryl said nonchalantly. "Physical and mental examination; but no erasure of memory."

DMEN GRABBED at Tryl's shoulders, his broad, rugged face expressing horror that slowly deadened into hopelessness. "But, Tryl! If they gave you any kind of mental examination at all, they must have uncovered your work..."

"Why should they have?" Tryl objected. "They were interested in my security fitness, not my research." He frowned, said pensively, "Anyhow, it's so completely harmless that if I didn't think the authorities would order me to stop work in it, I'd confess now."

"Tryl! Even hypnosis is forbidden. Mass hypnosis—"

"I know," Tryl sighed. "It's just that I'm not the type for a life of crime." His grin was rueful. "Not even crime for a good cause..."

"They've probably discovered it, but they're just lying low to try and learn your objective," Dmen said gloomily. "They'd never believe that anyone would be so altruistic—or so stupid—" he added with sudden bitterness, "as to go around hypnotizing people just for the people's benefit."

Tryl loosened his overall at the neck, and stretched out on the second bunk from the door in the line of eight bunks. "Now, that, Dmen, is where you're short-sighted." He gazed up at the ceiling, arms behind his head. "All the sadism in the world emanates from people in pain—some kind of pain. Cure the pain and you cure the cruelty." He glanced sideways at Dmen. "So I'm doing—or trying to do—this for my own benefit. Only," he sighed, "one at a time, it's slow work..."

Dmen had not moved from the center of the floor. "I suppose the Fortunate have nothing to do with it. The..."

Tryl swung his sandaled feet to the floor, glanced from Dmen to the closed door.

"They won't be back for another ten minutes. Answer my question."

Tryl rested a foot on the bunk edge,

embraced his knee, his eyes thoughtful. "They dress splendidly and live in unbelievable luxury; but I'm convinced they're exactly like us," he admitted. "You're right about that."

"And what of them?" Dmen insisted. "If limited mentalities could respond efficiently to the more complex tasks, every citizen would be mentally castrated. And you know it." Dmen's voice was unimpassioned but relentless. "What about a minute segment of the people exploiting all the rest... Condemning them to the drab, bare life of animals?"

"How do we know they're ruthless?" Tryl looked harassed. "Or, tell me a better way..."

Dmen sat down on Tryl's bunk beside him. "What makes you so sure they didn't learn anything about your work on mass hypnosis?"

"There's no way of my knowing—naturally; I wasn't conscious. But you can only find out so much about people through their unconscious, unless you know what you're probing for... All the Island Security cared about was whether I was dangerous to them. If my research had been intended for their harm, it would have shown up; but since it wasn't—" He shrugged.

"But what about me?" Dmen said skeptically. "You and you hiv-nure objectives are fine; your Fortune will protect you." He grimaced. "You believe in it, but I have no such protection. I hate the very word 'Fortunate'; I'd like to wipe it out..."

IT WAS an old argument; nor was Tryl's defense new. "There must always be rulers and ruled. You, Dmen, through your study of ancient ways, have decided that the ideal system would be government by those most qualified by their virtue and intelligence—a Platonic System, I believe you called it. But it wouldn't last; the more virtuous and intelligent men are, the less likely they are to

realize the cunning and dangerous minds of their fellows—and so the less likely to remain long in control..." Tryl's smile was bitter but resigned.

"But why the Fortune?"

Tryl grinned at his friend's heat. "Why not? At least we of the 25th century are honest. For centuries there were kings, selected—they claimed—by divine right. Then, for a brief period, an attempt was made by a people of the North American continent to demand some degree of achievement as requisite to the right to govern. It didn't last. A European idea ignited Asia—and the whole world eagerly submitted themselves to rule by force, sugar-coating it by the pretense that it was politically expedient. But always, men have been ruled by chance masquerading as virtue."

Tryl stood up, stretched. "We of the 25th century have torn the mask of virtue from chance. Men must have rulers, and there is never any justice in the selection of those rulers. But at least, by leaving the selection of our rulers to Fortune, we are honest about our weakness..."

Dmen looked up at him grimly. "How do we *know* the Fortunes are honest about administering their Fortune to the people?"

Tryl was finally impatient. "What do you mean, 'how do we know?'"

Tryl rarely grew angry, but Dmen persisted. "How do we know that, when they say which citizen shall be raised to the Fortunes, and which shall be sacrificed to the Mass-Guilt, they are truly selecting the names by pure chance? How do we know they aren't just elevating some and destroying some for their own personal reasons?"

Tryl was not only angry; he was alarmed. "Their own guilt would destroy them if they were not honest." He said urgently, "Without some trust, there would always be anarchy and chaos. Some place, men must trust! There is no other way!"

"Trust anything? Even a lie?"

"You have no way of knowing it's a lie!"

"And you," Dmen returned, "have no way of knowing it's the truth." He was now the calmer of the two. "You're wonderfully credulous, Tryl. The rare citizens selected to become Fortunes are invariably the most useful. And the more frequent ones selected to be Mass-Guilt sacrifices are, with equal consistence, trouble-makers who might spark a rebellion." Dmen's tone was gloomy. "If they selected me to be Mass-Guilt sacrifice, you'd probably believe it was pure Fortune..."

The door opened, and three of their roommates came in. Apu, the smallest of the three apparently sensed what the silence marked. "What? You two quarrelling?" His narrowed black eyes focused on the bigger of the two men. "Why weren't you at dinner, Dmen?"

The State disapproved of strong, close friendships between citizens. Dmen showed no expression. "I wasn't hungry."

Apu snorted. "Too afraid for Tryl!" His gaze swung to Tryl and he made an effort to sound amiable. "How did it go, Tryl? If we touch you, will some Fortune rub off on us?"

Tryl did not smile back. "If you touch me," he said coldly, "who knows what may rub off on you..."

Apu backed away from Tryl. Silenced, he returned his small, mean eyes to Dmen; but he did not say anything further to either of the men.

- 2 -

DURING THE night, each time Tryl woke, he awoke thinking of danger—danger to Dmen. Though any man not genuinely pious was in jeopardy as a non-conformist, Tryl knew that Dmen was right about being the most likely to suffer for his

views. Doctor Flag, Tryl's superior, valued him too highly to be easily deprived of his services; but Dmen was a transport pilot, easily replaced.

Unwillingly, Tryl acknowledged to himself that Dmen was right about the regime under which they lived being far from perfect. He was right, too, that the Mass-Guilt sacrifice was its worst feature. But it was equally undeniable that, since the Fortunes had compelled the Mass-Guilt sacrifice, there had been less widespread violence.

For centuries men had been aware that the price they paid for their civilization was a frustrated kill-instinct that burst out periodically in wars. Now, man's need to spill the blood of his fellows was satisfied by the sacrificial murder of one man by a group of his fellows.

No one knew which citizen would be chosen victim, or when the sacrifice would be held, or in what geographical location—though it had been noticed that the sacrifices were being held more frequently, as time went on.

All citizens were required to attend and watch the sacrifices, even though only a small percentage of them could actually fling the stones that resulted in the victim's death. But all participated spiritually; the penalty for non-participation was death beside the victim, and an armed guard was always present to enforce it. Thus all citizens acquired and expiated their blood-guilt; and were, supposedly, at peace. Tryl turned restlessly, unable to sleep.

But all his worrying was wrong. Early the next morning, when the Tole Security Patrol pounded on their door, it was not Dmen they wanted. Tryl was almost relieved to go along with them himself. They could browse as they liked among the channels of his mind—conscious and unconscious—and still not find the slightest degree of treason against the regime of the Fortunes.

A low degree of piety, yes—perhaps even impiety. But until he knew that the regime of the Fortunate was more evil than some other system, Tryl had no wish to replace them. Doctor Flag's ideal—the greatest good to the greatest number—made sense enough for him.

The guards did not take him to the "Information Center"—as the examination section of the Security Department was called, by citizens in no immediate likelihood of visiting it. Instead they again forwarded him to the Island of the Fortunate.

Again he was drugged and questioned, Tryl imagined, as to his fitness to be permitted within that precious area. However, since he was no longer conscious he could only guess at the sort of questioning he received.

Whatever they asked, he knew he must have passed their tests again, since accompanied by guards, he followed the woman servant through the spacious palace once more.

Partly to shatter their solemnity, and partly because he suspected that he might never enjoy even such relative privacy, Tryl decided to test his research on mass hypnotism. Whimsically, as he passed into the Fortunate's room, he mentally ordered all six of the guards and the woman servant to wink at him when he next emerged from the room. In unison.

This time Tryl approached the bed unbidden. This time the girl was wearing a fresh, pink, ruffled overall: The bedclothes, too, were smooth and neat. Tryl stood, waiting for her to speak. The arrogance with which she had viewed him before was no longer noticeable.

SHE BRUSHED her long, curly hair back from her face so that it fell attractively across her shoulders, gazed up at him for a second and then lowered her eyes to her hands, resting on the coverlet. "I have a headache," she said in a low tone of voice.

Tryl did not speak or move.

The girl glanced up at him. "You don't believe me?"

Tryl said mildly, "I didn't say I didn't believe you." He restrained a smile. "Shouldn't I believe you?"

Back again in the low tone, the girl said reluctantly, "I'm a liar..." She sighed. "Not usually; but here..."

"Why?"

"Because my father would not have sent for you if I told the truth."

It took Tryl a moment to realize what she meant by the word 'father.' No citizen knew who his father—or mother—was. The Fortunate, of course, were different. He said gently, "And the truth is?"

"My name is Bliss," the girl said formally. "I wanted to thank you for making me feel better..."

Tryl said, equally formally, "You are very gracious." He added truthfully, "It always gives me pleasure to help anyone." He bowed and turned toward the door.

"Wait!" Bliss said anxiously; "what if I should need you again?"

It was impossible for Tryl not to smile. She was a Fortunate; she could send for him at any time and never allow him to return, if she chose. And if there were the slightest conflict between his will and hers—or between the will of any Fortunate and any citizen—a simple form of lobotomy permanently resolved that conflict.

It was not an attractive situation for Tryl or the rest of the world; but without some form of submission to authority, there would be nothing but anarchy, and an even larger destruction. Tryl shrugged. "It is most unlikely you will ever need me again..."

"It was unlikely that I, a Fortunate, should have needed you, a citizen, this time..." Bliss' voice was firm, even. "But yours is a rare talent, Tryl..."

Tryl was silent. His talent was valuable—but dangerous; the less that was said about, the better.

Blis went on thoughtfully, "I have my own plane. And once—it is forbidden—once I left the Island of the Fortunate, masquerading as a citizen. I wanted to learn wherein they were different from us."

Tryl still did not answer. It was a strange and reckless thing for a girl to have done, but Blis was apparently a person of sensitivity and conscience. If she were, these things would drive her into such behavior. At least it explained where she had learned of him.

After a pause Blis went on. "Your record, Tryl, shows that you were trained to be a physician. For several years, you were an excellent physician, and then, suddenly, you asked to be excused from your duties. You begged to be given physical labor, menial labor, anything but the task for which you had been trained."

Tryl did not raise his eyes to her, so he could not see her face.

Patiently, Blis went on. "The government, Tryl, naturally does not like training people who refuse to carry out their function. If one of your instructors, the famed Doctor Flag, had not intervened in your behalf—pointed out that you would be equally useful as his assistant—you might have found yourself at the type of work you requested. In an Isolation Section..."

Tryl, in his light, loose overall, was sweating more copiously than when he had first stepped into the room the day before. Blis, or anyone else who was interested, could find out anything they wanted about him. His record was wide open—and badly blotted.

He could feel her eyes on him. He still didn't look at her. She said, "What the record does not show, Tryl, is *why* you asked to be excused from your task as physician..." Blis said quietly, "I am requesting information, Tryl?"

TRYL LOOKED at her finally, helplessly. "The record must also show the extensive examinations I was

put through; and that none of them ever explained why I couldn't keep on working as doctor..." He did not evade her eyes. "You don't think that I know the answer to something the most profound examination couldn't reveal?"

The girl's face relaxed into a tiny, relieved smile. "Tryl," she said, in an entirely different tone, "yesterday when I was in pain, your touch brought freedom from that pain..." She flung back the coverlet and stood up. "Today," she said, looking at him mischievously, "I am in no pain." She came over to him in two, quick, graceful steps, put her arms around his neck. "I am curious to know what your touch will do under these new circumstances..."

Tryl, kissing her, knew that it was what he had wanted to do from the first moment he saw her small willful mouth.

Later, when they were finally ready to part, Blis said to him tenderly, "You say go now, my Tryl; but not for long..."

Tryl was suddenly, belatedly aware of how unheard of it was for a citizen to do anything as fantastic as to love a Fortunate. He said nervously, "What do you mean?" Their idyl was over; there would be no reason—no excuse—for his ever seeing Blis again.

"Nothing you need be afraid of." Blis placed his hand against her cheek, then turning her head quickly, kissed his palm. "Only," she smiled secretly, "that I have a feeling you may soon be selected to become a Fortunate..."

Tryl tried to hide his horror. "My chances of that," he reminded fatuously, "are one in several billion..." He was remembering what Dmen had said about his credulity. He knew he wanted Blis, that he had never desired a female so strongly. But much as he wanted her, he was horrified by the possibility at which she was hinting. It would, he thought, be less sickening to be surgically prepared for her. Only

she did not want him as a mindless servant.

Watching his face, Blis said carefully, "Tryl, the Fortunates are permitted the luxury of a permanent connection..." She flushed. "If they wish it..." Painfully, she continued to explain, "We mate from choice and we can keep our children..."

"I know. You are permitted." —Tryl searched for the word—"a family."

Blis nodded. "We are the Fortunate; it is one of the privileges."

Tryl frowned, thinking about Dmen. Through trickery and Fortune, they had managed to remain together, since their school days. But their friendship was a constant threat; permanent loyalties were forbidden to citizens; the Isolation Sections were peopled largely by those who disobeyed.

Blis said persuasively, "You would be very happy here, Tryl; I would make you happy."

Tryl's frown deepened. She was leaving him no opportunity to misunderstand, and no illusions as to Fortune. Though he desired her, he made his voice cold. "It would mean leaving everyone I know..."

Blis' small, warm face turned equally aloof. She said remotely, "Who can tell what Fortune wills? In any case," she shrugged. "You would have nothing to say about it..." She looked at him steadily. "My love, however, is not compulsory." She nodded toward the door. "You may go now, Tryl; but you will soon return to the Island, I think."

LEAVING, Tryl could almost hear what she had left unspoken; he would return soon and remain forever. Her love might not be compulsory, but there was no escape from sacrifice to the Mass-Guilt; and equally, no escape from elevation to the Fortunate. Not that it was conceivable that any man should not want to become one of the Fortunate—except himself. He, Tryl,

did not want it; not this way; not unless it was his honest chance-chosen Fortune.

As he closed the door of Blis' room behind him, he was startled to see every man of the waiting palace guard—and the servant woman—solemnly wink at him, in unison. For one embarrassed moment, he thought that they must have been listening at the door of Blis' room; then he remembered his irreverent experiment in mass hypnosis. Apparently, the experiment was successful. However, these were limited mentalities.

During his return to Tole, Tryl concentrated on trying to recall what had made it impossible for him to continue as physician. Blis' words strongly suggested that Dmen's accusation was true. Apparently the Fortunates were dishonest in their administration of Fortune. If they were, and if there was ever to be any relief from their rule, it would be most likely to be found in something that had escaped their understanding.

Yet, in every way Tryl knew himself to be an average, ordinary citizen. Like every other child—except the Fortunates—he had been conceived, born, raised, and educated by the government. The creation of progeny, for the betterment of the species, was state-ordered and state-regulated. However, sometimes exceptionally-ennamoured couples cared enough about each other to conceive, even knowing that the child would be taken from them at birth.

The state had no objection—so long as the same two people never conceived more than one infant. Disobedience of this law resulted in destruction of both children, for two children by the same parents—siblings—posed the possibility of a loyalty that might threaten the state.

Naturally every citizen, Tryl included, liked to think he was the product of such a "love" union. But there was no possible way of knowing, since

all children were taken by the state at birth and raised in groups.

Later, as personalities and intellects began to show signs of difference—and they always did, no matter how uniform the environment,—tests were applied to select children for whatever they were best suited for.

Tryl could honestly think of nothing that might explain what had happened to him a year ago. Until that time he had been perfectly normal; he was certain he had always like his work. But one morning he had awakened knowing positively that he could work as a doctor no longer.

He had not lied, either to Blis or to his examiners, as to his ignorance of why he could not continue as doctor. Luckily for Tryl, Doctor Flag—suspecting Tryl's odd ability to dissipate pain without either drugs or medicine—had pleaded to be given Tryl's as assistant.

He descended the plane at Tole airport and headed for the nearest Food Center. Romance—even with a Fortunate—still had the customary effect of making him hungry. He showed the proper clerk the identification tattoo on his arm and went in to the noon meal.

He ate quickly, thinking with some satisfaction, that at least Doctor Flag should no longer be in jeopardy because of having defended him. It was frightening how easily it might have turned out the opposite way.

Finishing, he hurried to the hospital and to the man to whom he owed so much.

- 3 -

THE HEAVY-SET, grey haired man bending over the bed was not aware of Tryl's soft-footed entrance. When he did see him his voice was exasperated. "Tryl. Good; come here."

Tryl stood beside him while the older man scowled down at the bulky,

unconscious female in the bed. Her moaning lessened as they stood there.

Doctor Flag said curtly, "What took you so long? It's not good for either her or the baby to fill them full of a lot of anaesthetic."

Under Tryl's touch, the woman stopped her moaning completely; her breathing became that of the peaceful sleeper.

Flag's scowl faded. "Why didn't you do that long ago?" he demanded of Tryl, with mock severity.

Tryl started to answer him seriously. "I'm sorry, Doctor Flag, but I was—"

"No, no," Flag interrupted, gesturing; "I was only joking. You were away on duty; that's all I need to know, eh?" He lowered his chin and regarded Tryl through the upper part of his bifocals. "Right, Tryl?" He grinned. "You were away on duty..."

Tryl was silent. Doctor Flag knew what was going on, and was pleased. He, Tryl, would be pleased, too, if the price of his own good Fortune would not be his belief in the honesty of Fortune.

As they walked down the hall Flag commented moodily, "What I wish you could teach me, Tryl, is how you work your magic. I used to think you needed to touch people. Lately, your just being near them seems to help..."

Tryl glanced at him quickly. Their favorite game was investigating his odd talent. Tryl, too, had noticed that lately his mere presence seemed to convey the relief—although he had always been careful to continue to pretend that it was his touch, that did the trick. The state did not approve of mental tricks, considering them impious.

Flag went on gloomily, "Every year, females have a harder time with their babies; yet our breeding is supposed to be an improvement. We're supposed to be getting better control of nature all the time..." He scowled. "Something's wrong..."

"Maybe," Tryl suggested hesitantly, "the babies are not coming along the lines that nature intends..."

Flag grinned at Tryl. "How many ways," he demanded in good natured sarcasm, "are there for babies to come?" Why Tryl was silent, Flag said seriously, "Perhaps I know what you mean, Tryl, but what can I do? I'm only a doctor..." He sighed. "This is the way they want it."

"They," of course, were the Fortunate. But if they actually thought this form of breeding improved the species, it was hypocritical of them not to allow it themselves. Whether or not it improved the species, it did strengthen the state by eliminating the family; people with no strong loyalties had no reason to fight for anything.

Tryl wondered how many people knew that the Fortunate did not follow the breeding techniques they required of the citizens. He asked recklessly, "Do you think they breed this same way?"

Doctor Flag glanced nervously up and down the corridor, but they were alone. "Who knows what they do?" His tone was fearful but dogged. "But if they do not, it would be a cruel thing for them to make us..."

Like animals, Tryl thought, angrily. But how could he object to their ways unless he had something better to substitute. Dmen would say that exposure of a lie was a form of truth. Dmen liked to say that man's only similarity to the admirable god-figures with which he liked to compare himself lay in his devotion to the truth.

Dmen said, scornfully, that willingly to deviate from the truth, as men knew it to be, was to become lower than the animals, who at least did not know what the truth was:

Tryl knew that the people submitted to the rule of the Fortunate because there was less carnage under it than ever in the past. Again, Tryl

could hear Dmen's insistent thought—that to citizens of honor, life without honor was less attractive than death with it...

ON HIS WAY home to the apartment-dormitory Tryl deliberately delayed, in order to run into Dmen, who finished his plane run later than he finished at the hospital.

But when Tryl neared the building, Dmen was already there, hurried toward him. "I've been waiting for you," he said with irritation. "I got early especially so as to have a private word with you."

"And, I," Tryl grinned ruefully, "dawdled so as to run in to you..."

"What goes on with you and the Fortunate?" Dmen demanded fearfully. "Are you still the same Tryl?"

Tryl shivered a trifle but forced himself to hold his smile. "The same and better," he said cheerfully. "You'll say nothing of this, Dmen, but set your mind at ease. I seem to have made a good impression on the Fortunate whose headache I cured..."

"A female!" Dmen gasped presciently, in a tone of doom.

"A beautiful girl," Tryl echoed, dreamily reminiscent.

"They haven't raised a citizen to the Fortunate for many years," Dmen said thoughtfully. "They might take you..."

"She's hard to resist," Tryl admitted. "Charming and human. I wish I didn't have to..."

"Why should you?" Dmen stared at Tryl. "If ever a man deserved good Fortune, that man is you."

Tryl hesitated. He said reluctantly, "It might be a way to do some good. For you..."

"I'm going to need it. They had me in to the Information Center today..." Tryl's heart skipped a beat. Apu had turned Dmen in; this was what he feared most. Dmen finished, "That they let me go proves nothing." He nodded over his shoulder toward

their doorway. "Because we're again popular with Tole Security."

Tryl hoped that they wanted him again. Irrelevantly, he remarked, "At the Fortunate's palace this time I hypnotized a patrol of six men and the servant woman. Simultaneously. All limited mentalities, though, I think."

Dmen looked less gloomy. "Perhaps you really are Fortunate!" He looked at Tryl with growing enthusiasm. "Tryl, if you're selected to be a Fortunate, I'll believe they're honest after all!"

It was ironic that exactly what would convince Dmen that the Fortunates were honest would prove them liars to Tryl. He said non-committally, "Once, Dmen, you thought I was—some sort of a layer-on of hands, you called it; a holy man. But since what I do is merely hypnosis, and does not really require any laying-on of hands, that disproves your romantic theory..."

"Not at all," Dmen contradicted; "I remember clearly. They called them prophets because they could foretell events. And the best ones—like you—didn't have to touch each person to affect them—"

Tryl made a disgusted noise. "I can't foretell whether it's going to rain tomorrow!" But he did know, miserably, that Dmen was in for trouble.

"I understand it now," Dmen glowed, undeterred. "These prophets must have been mass hypnotists like you... But functioning only under the right circumstances..."

"A prepared audience," Tryl said cynically. "Or a good dark night." He wished he could help Dmen; do something. What good was a talent that couldn't help his best friend.

Fleeing from the Security guards was little help in a world that required a citizen to show his identification before he could eat. All food had to be consumed on the premises that served it. A man could remain hidden for as

long as he could go without eating; no longer.

"Listen, Dmen," Tryl said angrily, helplessly, "if you are sent to an Isolation Section—I'm coming, too. My lovely Fortunate can look elsewhere for a playmate..." It was childish promise; he had no idea how he could accomplish it. But it was the kind of promise Dmen would make to him, and keep.

"You're crazy," Dmen smiled indulgently.

"Somehow!" Tryl's tone was stubborn. "I couldn't love anyone connected with your persecution, no matter how much I liked them..."

Dmen laughed out loud. He made a sudden right about-turn, started pulling Tryl in the direction of their apartment. "We may as well know the worst," he said. He added reasonably, "And, Tryl, don't blame the female for the regime. Even I can be that fair..."

BACK AT their apartment, four of their roommates and the Tole Security guard watched them enter in an awed silence. Tryl noted with a sinking heart that the guard was much larger than customary for an arrest. They must consider Dmen very dangerous to send a dozen men for him.

Tryl hesitated at the door, but Dmen, more resigned, came ahead on into the room. He ignored his roommates and looked at the stripmarked overall of the senior member of the guards present. "I'm Dmen," he said calmly; "I suppose you want me?"

The guard cleared his throat. "Also," he glanced at Tryl and then dropped his eyes, "Tryl." In the silence Dmen's agonized gaze swung from Tryl to the door, though both men knew how brief their respite would be even if they escaped. The guard continued, "Tryl has been selected to be raised to the Fortunate..."

Dmen exhaled noisily in relief. "Tryl!" he exploded. "I knew it! I

always knew it was your Fortune! Now I can believe in Fortune!"

Grimly, Tryl demanded of the guard, "And why is Dmen wanted?"

The guard's voice was no less awed. "Dmen had been selected for sacrifice to the Mass-Guilt..."

Tryl's heart stopped beating. Under his horrified stare Dmen shrugged. "It's my Fortune," he calmed Tryl. He smiled regretfully, "Different from yours, Tryl, but still, my Fortune..."

Tryl seized Dmen's arm, tried to drag him to the door.

The guard barred their way. "Forgive me," he said respectfully, "but I must bring you in; it's my duty."

Furiously, Tryl wished the man would take out his patriotic devotion in singing the national hymn, "*Fortune's Pawn Am I*." He wished they would all sing it; it would give Dmen and himself a chance to escape.

Astonishingly, at his thought, every man in the room started singing. It took Tryl two of the six verses to realize that they were responding to his mental suggestion.

Dmen—shocked, too—stared at Tryl. "Are they crazy?"

"No." Tryl said tautly; "I made them do it." He moved the unresisting, lustily singing guard away from the door, nodded to Dmen. "Come on; let's go."

Dmen spread his legs stubbornly. Tryl couldn't budge him. "Where? And why?"

"Anyplace." Tryl cried. "Do you want to be stoned to death?"

Dmen made a face. "I don't like the idea. But what can I do? It's my Fortune..."

"Not unless you want it." The men were beginning the last verse, and Tryl didn't know how much more mental suggestion he could get them to accept. He said desperately, "Will you come?"

"No." Dmen looked at Tryl with affection. "I know you, Tryl. You would give up your good Fortune, throw it

into the balance to equalize my bad Fortune, but I won't let you do it." He said severely, "Anyhow, it would be impious to attempt to alter one's Fortune..."

"That's all a hoax!" Tryl was furious. "You were right before; it's nothing but a lie! The Fortunate use their so called chance-chosen Fortune to perpetuate their own regime!"

The men's voices were rising to the high note of the national hymn. Dmen's voice was a warm, baritone counter-point. "Since Fortune has chosen to benefit you," he said stubbornly, "I feel that I have faith in it..."

Helplessly, Tryl watched the singers come to the end of the hymn. The men studied their surroundings with the confused look of people who have dozed off for a moment, and feel that they missed something.

THE SENIOR guard apparently decided to ignore whatever had happened, since both Tryl and Dmen were still there. He asked Dmen nervously, "Will you come now?"

Dmen went to him, smiling encouragement at Tryl. "Willingly."

After Dmen had left, it no longer seemed important to Tryl what he did. Unresistingly he accompanied the other guard detail—his personal honor guard—to the Island of the Fortunate. With Dmen gone, it no longer mattered where he went.

The following morning, a servant ushered him to a rose-scented garden. Blis, dressed in a white satin overall was waiting for him.

Determinedly, she tried charming Tryl into happiness. Instead his gloom infected her. She said sorrowfully finally, "At least I have learned something."

Tryl looked at her without curiosity. "The Fortunate are gathering to witness our vow of permanent connection... However, now I see that love can only be invited..." Blis added

painfully, "It may be that I do not deserve your love..."

Tryl stared morosely at an hibiscus bush, bright with red blossoms and green leaves. Right now, as Blis spoke of love, citizens in Tole were being selected and ordered to the Mass-Guilt sacrifice; refusal was not permitted.

Though it was always held at the largest of the local Games Stadiums, only a small percentage of the citizens could witness the sacrifice in person. The rest were compelled to watch the ritual over video, with microphones transmitting the muffled thud of each stone as it found its target of human flesh.

Of the thousands of citizens who personally witnessed the ceremony, a smaller group of three hundred would stone the victim to death. Again, unless the unwilling citizen wanted to take his place beside the victim, no refusal was permitted.

Those who shrank from the dreadful obligation to kill, comforted themselves with the fact that before the Mass-Guilt sacrifices there had been wars and a far greater toll of death. They told themselves Fortune had selected their victim—that it might have been themselves.

Tryl, himself among those required to stone the last victim to death a year ago, remembered how desperately he had tried to believe that it was a smaller evil than its alternative—war. But he remembered how horrified he had been that he, a physician, should kill.

THERE, IN Blis' quiet, fragrant garden Tryl understood suddenly why he had no longer been able to continue as physician. Though his gift had not forsaken him, his self-respect had. Examination had not been able to reveal what he did not know himself; now he knew.

Blis said despairingly, "Is there anything I can do to make you love me?"

"You can tell me the truth."

For a long time she was silent. When she did speak her voice was hopeless. "That is the one thing that will surely make you despise me..."

Dmen had said he should not blame the girl for the regime. Tryl said gently, "The Fortunatees don't really abide by Fortune—do they, Blis? They merely pretend to, in order to perpetuate themselves."

"If we lie," Blis defended halfheartedly, "it's to be a good end. There is less bloodshed under our rule than ever before..."

Tryl recognized his own defense. That forced him to Dmen's side of the argument. "But how can a lie—and cruelty—ever be right?"

"Would you rather have more blood? More deaths?"

"I would rather have the truth; and one day, if Fortune wills it, no blood..." Tryl gazed at Blis thoughtfully. "Did you say that all the Fortunatees would be gathered? To witness our vows?"

"If you would have had it," Blis said hopelessly, "they are waiting for us now..."

Tryl was beginning to hope. He had hypnotized the Tole Security guards; and theirs were not limited mentalities, even if the Island guards' were. Perhaps he might be the instrument of a Fortune that existed despite the Fortunatees' own disbelief in it. Perhaps through his freak talent he might sway them...

Tryl said buoyantly, "I will have it; let us go."

Blis nodded slowly; she had come to some decision. She said calmly, "You are going to attempt to depose the rule of the Fortunatees. They have been my people, Tryl, but I know what we do is wrong." Her small features were very grave with her thoughts. "I renounce my people and my ways, Tryl; I'll help you."

Tryl hesitated, divided between his need for her help and his fear for her

safety. Deliberately, he had not imposed his will on Blis; he wanted her submission to be as voluntary as she wanted his love to be. Yet here she was, as completely his as if he had commanded her to assist him. He said troubledly, "Blis, this may be dangerous; I don't want you harmed..."

Blis said, "I wish to atone for what has been done." She stood up. "Come."

- 4 -

THE ISLAND of the Fortunate was one of the largest in the Pacific Ocean. Where millions of people had once lived, now a few hundreds of Fortunates held their vast estates.

Blis piloted her small plane to the meeting place. They arrived in minutes, and Blis led Tryl among the gorgeously-dressed, gay, laughing people. Playfully, the Fortunates teased the two newcomers about their imminent vow of permanent connection. Tryl was bitterly aware of what a sacred privilege that vow would seem to the billions of citizens who were denied the luxury of even a close friendship.

Later, in the grand meeting hall, during a silent moment of the ceremony, Tryl focused his mind as powerfully as he could and willed for all the Fortunates present to recite aloud their intention to give up their rule of the citizens.

The low continuing mumble of the one elderly Fortunate, who was leading the ceremony of the vow, came as a bad shock to Tryl's ears. Again, as strongly as he knew how, Tryl, his muscles tightening with the intensity of his effort, mentally ordered the Fortunates to utter aloud their abnegation.

Still nothing happened. Tryl started to turn, to glare openly at the audience who was refusing to do as he willed. Blis' arm on his brought him back to himself.

A glance at Blis—plus the fact of her silence—convinced him that even she was impervious to his thoughts. He couldn't understand it; he had been so positive he was capable of mass hypnosis. At first it had been only people in pain; but later, it had been the guards who had brought him to Blis. Later still, the guards who had come for Dmen and himself.

Only a short while ago, Blis, with everything to lose, had given herself over to his will without reservation. He had finally come to believe in Dmen's superstitious talk of prophets with special powers; he had come to believe that he was such a man. It would have made his mission wonderfully simple had he been.

Sorrowfully, Tryl realized why he had been deceived. In every case, the people he had controlled had been willing to do as he commanded. It was natural for people in pain to anticipate relief. It had been a natural thing for the guard and servant woman ushering him to what—even their limited mentalities no doubt sensed—was a lover's meeting, to wink. And it was natural for the guard, coming to escort him to the Fortunates and Dmen to become Mass-Guilt sacrifice, to be in a fervor of religious and patriotic emotion.

Nor was it strange for Blis, who loved him, to be willing to do as he wanted, even though that meant to die for him. Tryl thought of that as the elderly fortunate droned on with the ceremony. Of Blis being willing to die for him.

WHEN THE ceremony was concluded, as soon as he could get Blis alone, Tryl whispered in her ear, "I must go back to Tole; now."

She was not surprised. "I knew you would, Tryl." She drew him away from the gay crowd. "It's all right for us to leave," she said. her smile was sad; "it's even customary..."

"Not us!" Tryl turned and grasped her two arms. "I must go alone! All

you need do is tell me how to handle your plane to get there."

Blis shook her head. "Not alone; I will go with you."

"They'll kill you," Tryl argued futilely. "Even if the citizens don't recognize you as a Fortunate, the Fortunes will surely notice you are gone. And kill you when you return."

"And you," Blis pointed out quietly, "in Tole will be recognized; even more surely—and killed."

"But I have to go!"

Blis moved toward the field where the planes were kept. "With me," she said firmly; "or not at all. My place is by your side."

Helplessly, Tryl followed her. Where he was going, he did not want her by his side; but without her help, Dmen would die alone. He realized gloomily how useless his talent was where it was most needed. He could not even persuade her to do what he wanted, much less compel her; he followed her into the plane.

The plane was not intended for fast or distant flights. It was nearly dark by the time they had covered the several thousand miles to Tole. The darkness increased Tryl's chance of reaching Dmen's side unrecognized—and made it more urgent for then to hasten. The Mass-Guilt sacrifice was held to strict schedule.

They blended in with the crowd hurrying to the Games Stadium, Blis clutching Tryl's arm, refusing to be separated from him. Tryl was leaving it to Fortune to provide him with the opportunity to escape her.

It was at the brightly-lighted gate of the Stadium that he found that opportunity. Tryl explained to her, "At these gates," he gestured to the orderly line of men and women, who, arm tattoo exposed, were filing past the guards into the building, "enter the citizens selected to kill the victim." Blis looked as he bade her.

"The guards are checking their identifications off on their lists to insure

that those citizens selected are present..."

Sick with the memory of his own blood-guilt, Tryl went on, "The penalty for not fulfilling their religious and patriotic duty to kill is death for themselves."

Blis looked very pale under the harsh lights. Tryl, aware that she was as trapped by the system as he had been, pitied her; she detested it as fiercely as he did.

He drew her along another hundred yards to another, wider gate; at this gate many more people were entering. Tryl said, "Here is where those who need only watch the sacrifice enter. Here is where we may hope to break in."

Blis said fearfully, "But here, too, a guard is checking the citizens' identification. I have none; and yours marks you as the citizen who has just been raised to the Fortunate..."

Tryl's face was grim. "Watch," he ordered tightly. "You'll see that sometimes over-eager citizens, who are not on the selected lists, rush the guards and force their way in anyhow." Tryl said somberly, "Not everyone dislikes the Mass-Guilt ceremony..."

"They—the guards—allow it?"

Tryl's voice was bitter. "It is considered a preventive evil. It is felt that any citizen who is that eager to witness the sacrifice must need the sacrifice to quiet him; and that it is better to let those who want it that strongly have it..."

Blis shuddered.

Tryl spoke with more composure. "So here, we must separate, Blis. You'll notice that these occasional blood-thirsty citizens come in groups for mutual support. But these groups are exclusively male or female; they are not mixed." Tryl explained, "I shall have to join a group of men, you a group of women—"

"I'll lose you!" Blis was not surprised or afraid; her tone held only

heartbreak. "I'll never see you again Tryl."

For a time Tryl did not answer her. He longed to comfort her, yet he did not want to lie to her; and he knew she was right. He smiled down at her to let her see he was not afraid. "We must have faith in our Fortune," he said finally, without mockery.

He kissed her on the forehead, and, merging suddenly with a small group of men at that moment forcing the gate, he made his way into the Stadium before Blis could stop him.

INSIDE, the spectacle was all too familiar. In the very heart and center of the Stadium was the post to which the victim would be fastened. Men in pain, no matter how pious, usually sought to escape their pain; and death by stoning was a slow process.

The post, with its microphone to catch every sound of the dying victim, and its raised platform to highlight the drama, were painted white—white to contrast with the blood of the victim.

The citizens who had been selected to do the killing were also stationed down in the arena, under much heavier guard than the mere spectators on the ramps above.

The pile of stones and the throwing sir was located so close to the victim's stake that no one of the selected three hundred citizens could miss the victim. No matter how little taste they had for the stoning, they were forced to aim well and throw strongly. The stone they flung was identified with their number. If it was not stained with blood or juices of the victim, they would share his fate.

Tryl, making his way along the familiar passageways, wondered how he could have failed to question any method that relied so heavily, and at so many points, on force.

A sudden, swelling cry from many throats warned Tryl his time was short; they had brought out the vic-



tim. Tryl ran down the last tier of steps and presented himself at the solid rank of heavily-armed guards who barred the way to the arena proper.

Here, complete order was necessarily maintained. The occasional hot-headed, bloodthirsty citizens who forced their way into the Stadium would make a speedy and savorless job of killing the victim if they ever crashed through into the arena. The entire effect and meaning of the sacrifice would be lessened by their crude haste and excitement.

When Tryl was within a few feet of the solid line of guards, the three closest to him drew their handguns. The guard in charge of the group came to him. He ordered crisply, "Go back to your place, citizen; the sacrifice is about to begin."

Tryl stared at the guns and came no further. His death here would do no good at all. "I am not a citizen," he said slowly; "I am Tryl the Fortunate."

The nearer guards, hearing, smiled.

The one in command had heard other wild statements from citizens over-eager to participate in the sacrifice. "You are indeed Fortunate," he said, motioning negligently with the gun in his hand. "I'm going to allow you to leave here. Now!" he said sharply.

Tryl came a step nearer him. The head guard grasped his gun more firmly. Tryl bared his identification tattoo. "Have you not heard of Tryl?"

Grudgingly, the guard looked at Tryl's arm. His eyes widened in recognition, and then angry indecision showed on his face. He looked divided between a wish to kneel to Tryl and a desire to shoot him. His confusion was visible enough to shock the other guards into a like awe.

The senior officer said uncertainly, "Fortunate, then, no longer; to return to the citizens is to die..."

"And that," Tryl said quietly, "is what I came for..." He looked at the guard. "Now, will you let me pass?"

The guard swallowed. "To disturb the ceremony is forbidden..."

"I will not disturb the ceremony." Tryl promised; "in fact, I will make it doubly good..."

AS THE guard stood undecided, Tryl heard the noise of the crowd slowly die down into a complete silence. This was the silence with which the crowd listened for the number of the citizen selected to come to the throwing site and fling his stone.

Not daring to wait longer, Tryl shoved the pondering guard aside and raced straight down the short corridor that led to the arena. As he ran, his flesh shrinkingly anticipated the searing finger of the guns with which the guards could easily burn him down. Protected by their superstitious awe of killing a Fortunate, Tryl gained the arena safely.

Once in the arena, he still had a long way to go. He knew that every eye must be on him as he ran toward the

post to which the white-garbed Dmen was fastened.

Though the number of the citizen who would cast the first stone had already been called, it was a task to which few hurried. No one in the arena moved but Tryl; a murmuring rose from the crowd on the tiers as they watched him.

The murmuring ceased as Tryl leaped on to the white platform and embraced his friend. "Don't think I'm joining you here because you are my friend" Tryl mocked the larger man lovingly. "Actually, I am doing belatedly something that I should have done at my last Mass-Guilt sacrifice..."

"Tryl!" Dmen said in horror. "Why did you come? Now they'll kill you too!"

"That," Tryl said serenely, "is what I came for."

The leader of the Mass-Guilt ceremony, aghast at what was happening, shrilly repeated the number he had called. Hesitantly, the summoned man arose. The leader made an angry gesture, and a guard escort surrounded the citizen, herded him toward the casting site. The man marched, shrinkingly, among the guards.

The Stadium was very quiet. Tryl's voice was loud and clear. Tryl pointed at the citizen being unwillingly marched to the throwing site. "Last year, Dmen, I stood in that man's place..."

Tryl's voice was full of regret. "A year late, I come to do what I should have done then..." The microphone carried his words to every part of the stadium.

The citizen-killer arrived at the casting site, reluctantly accepted the white-painted, black-numbered stone handed him by a guard. Tryl glanced from the first thrower to the remaining two-hundred and ninety-nine citizens who, under threat of death to themselves, would continue to stone

Dmen and himself until they were dead.

Anyone who had ever witnessed the sacrifice and heard the cries of the victim knew that it was a slow and dreadful death. The first citizen was taking a long time to make his cast. To comfort Dmen, Tryl tried to explain it. "I am still very afraid to die, Dmen." He shrugged, broke off helplessly, then said, "But somehow, I want to."

THE CITIZEN hesitated no longer. He flung his stone forcefully to the ground beside him and crossed the short distance to the white platform on which Dmen and Tryl stood. He climbed up on the platform beside them.

The crowd let out a long, low exhalation. The murmur was as though a giant had held his breath for longer than he could bear.

Desperately, the announcer called a second number. Another citizen rose, marched to the throwing site, accepted his stone—and flung it disdainfully to the ground. He, too, moved across to the spotlighted platform. The crowd murmured again, and the murmuring swelled.

Before the announcer could even call another number, an older woman separated herself from the remaining two hundred and ninety-eight killer-citizens; without bothering to go through the routine with the stone, she moved directly from the group to the victim's platform.

The noise from all the tiers of the huge stadium was deafening. Citizens move out into the aisles and started pouring down toward the arena calling and laughing and crying. Even if those in the front had feared the guards' guns, the pressure from behind would have driven them on.

The rest of the three hundred citizens in the arena moved as one mass toward the victim's platform.

Tryl, struggling with the rope that bound Dmen to the stake, finally managed to free him. "Quick," he said

breathlessly; "in this crowd we may have a chance to escape!"

Dmen stood immovable. "What," he asked in an amused tone of voice, "do you think you are escaping from?"

Tryl scowled at him. "Please, Dmen, no arguments; not now!"

"But the citizens are on your side!" stared at his friend. "Is it possible you don't know? You've hypnotized them." He shrugged. "Naturally, I should have known..."

"I can't have!" Tryl, in horror, tried to drag Dmen. "You've got to listen to me Dmen! Many of the citizens like the Mass-Guilt ceremony! And I have no power to make people do anything except what they want to do."

"Even the prophets could do no more." Dmen grinned laconically. "Listen!" Among the frenzy of sound could be distinguished oftenest the words, "Tryl! Leader!"

Dmen laughed out loud at Tryl's face. The he sobered. "Only I fear for your charming female Fortunate. This crowd could go on to destroy the entire Island of the Fortunate..."

"She came with me." Tryl anxiously scanned the nearer echelons of the growing waves of citizenry converging about the white platform.

"Wither thou goest, I go," Dmen quoted softly. "Did she, really?"

"That's that *she* said." Tryl replied absently. He knew that Blis could not be far away.

"A quotation from a very old book." Dmen was pleased to show off his erudition, but Tryl had seen the small face he was looking for and gone plunging into the crowd.

Dmen shrugged philosophically and picked up the white rope with which he had been bound. It would make a nice souvenir. Then he shook his head, looped it carefully together. It was too valuable for a souvenir; it now belonged in a museum.



BEWILDERED?

YOU MAY have noticed that the major trade book firms are not publishing science fiction any more—that is, they aren't bringing out books labelled "science fiction". P. Schuyler Miller complains about this in a recent edition of "Reference Library", and I have heard substantiating comments elsewhere. In fact, rumor has it that a recent and successful book was "sold" because the higher ups took the line that it wasn't science fiction—good heavens, no—not that! Just sort of "Bridey Murphey" stuff, you know.

Then one hears bewildered remarks to the effect that some of the recent novels that have been labelled science fiction, such as the new Avalon series, aren't exactly science fiction. After all, take "Three To Conquer" by Eric Frank Russell ("Call Him Dead"); why, that's a suspense story. "Or "Police

Your Planet" by Erik van Lhin"—that's a crime-busting tale, and so on. Where, the objectors seem to be asking, is the science fiction?

I suppose they mean: where are the flying saucers, the robots, the monsters, the invaders from Mars, the giant insects, the mad scientists, the catastrophic inventions? Where are all the comicstrip devices that have become associated in the public mind with "science fiction"? And the books go into the teen-age division of book stores and libraries, which means among other things that they must be scrutinized carefully to make sure that they do not contain any s-x, etc.

Rather a letdown, isn't it?

Or is it?

The editor of *Astounding Science Fiction* has taken polls of his readership

at times, in an effort to determine to what age-groups, interest groups, and vocation-groups the bulk of them belong. And the returns seem to indicate that the majority are males, between college and middle age, of technical turns of mind, and technical and/or scientific vocations. But I think this is the only science fiction magazine whose majority readership would fall into such classification.

We haven't solid evidence; we can only surmise upon the basis of long term and very minute percentage-of-following reports indicated by such sources as letters received and/or published, fan activities, and so on.

Attendance at conventions—particularly the annual World Convention—hasn't been reliable for a long time. There you see professionals (authors, editors, publishers, artists, etc); veteran fans and semi-professionals; swarms of people who apparently just appeared where someone rubbed at spirit lamp (100 proof spirits); and finally, fans. The latter look rather lost in the melee and are far from the noisiest element. Forget about that "Beanie crowd" gag; the whoop-and-holler boys at the World Conventions are authors trying to impress each other; editors and publishers, trying to corral them; members of the Convention Committee trying to salvage some part of the program, and almost anyone trying to locate Randall Garrett.

The fans can generally be found at the exhibits and magazine concessions; in the main hall when something is going on, or surrounding various authors and editors with autograph books—and quite orderly about it. The rest (except for the authors, etc. and only at any session where "celebrities" are being introduced, or they're on "panels", etc.) should be sought anywhere else—which means the bar or at private parties.

And the fans seem pretty largely to be of highschool age, or college undergrad age. Just as most of the current professionals were when they were mere fans.

I SUSPECT that here is the largest and most reliable group within the breakdown of science fiction followers. "Most reliable" in the sense that this is the group that is constantly renewing itself, as a group. They started young, and if they stuck with science fiction, it was because they had the necessary imagination to follow the literature. And because the gradations of ma-

turity in appeal existed and continue to exist.

What about serious, adult science fiction books for the general book-reading public? This unit is small and, as recent investigations indicate, seems to be growing smaller. Yet, it does exist and there's hope that it will last; and this is the group that the serious-minded science fictionist wants to see "converted" and impressed with science fiction as "literature"—not as a limited, closed circle, material for whom is reviewed in special sections of book-review departments, as are mystery-detective novels.

Well, we've seen that the book-reading public does go for fads. There was the Velikovsky fad, the Bridey Murphy fad, and flying saucers still have innings. And there was a science fiction fad, too. Nor were all the books published during that time examples of putting science fiction's worst foot forward, either.

But the surge of interest in science fiction as *science fiction* is, I think, over—except possibly in the teen age department.

Still, science fiction novels can be published and can be sold by the general trade publishers—so long as they aren't labelled science fiction. Call them something else, anything else. Call one a suspense novel; another a social satire; another an exploration of whatever—and there's a chance that such a book can stand or fall on its merits.

Bewildering?

It shouldn't be. The general public *has* become aware of "science fiction" but the identification it has made with the term is not one which will do anyone any good, so far as the hopes of serious science-fictionists are concerned. And it is no—*positively* NO—use to lament the fact, to evade it by long explanations of how it happened to come about, or try to convince the public of error. The idea has become like a moving freight car; as Dr. Macklin explains, with the right greasing of the wheels, and a steady push, you can get it in motion—but heaven help whoever tries to stop it then by standing in front of it.

You might as well try to convince people that when you call someone "radical", or "a radical", this does not mean the party is any kind of extremist, but is a person trying to get at the root of things.

RWL.

Anyone could know the truth about the President — except
the President!



The President was ready . . .

INAUGURATION

by MARGARET ST. CLAIR

illustrated by Emsh

DR. ELKINS said, "I'll have to tell him something." He passed his hand over his eyes wearily. "He's been complaining of dysphoria, lassitude, painful mental and physical fatigue. They always say the same thing; even the words are almost the same. I ought to know—I've been physician-in-chief to three presidents."

"It's the hardest office in the world," the younger man—his name was Reubens, and his speciality, unlike Elkins', was neurology—commented. "They always wear out before the end of the four years."

"It's hard on me too," Elkins said. "What kind of medical ethics is it—what kind of any ethics—to lie to a patient? I'd give a lot if I could tell him the truth; but, of course, I have no choice."

"No. He mustn't find out; he

couldn't do his job if he knew."

"I'm always surprised that they don't realize," Elkins said, carrying on his train of thought. "He doesn't even realize what he's looking for. We know, but we can't give it to him."

"That's only temporary."

"Eh? Oh—of course, you're right; but I feel pretty sorry for him."

"It can't be helped," Reubens said; "it's the law. Ever since 1970, when the non-partisan act was passed..."

"—I wish to God I didn't have to examine him this afternoon."

The patient sat up on the examining table. He was a spare, small-boned man, only a little above medium height, in late middle age. The wrinkles around his eyes seemed to have been made by laughter originally. "Did you find anything wrong?" he asked.

"Ummmm...Not very much, Mr. President."

The patient sighed. "Medical science has advanced so much," he observed; "and yet, neither you nor the other doctors can seem to do anything to help me." His eyes were not so much reproachful as puzzled.

"I wouldn't say that, sir," Dr. Elkins retorted. "I found a—I guess a layman would call it a small tumor—that I'm going to remove. You ought to feel better after it's gone. But you ought to remember, Mr. President, that for nearly four years now you've been holding down the hardest job in the world." He began popping instruments into an autoclave.

"I know that; I can still perform my duties, though it's a terrible strain. But I've lost something, some human contact. Perhaps I should have married, but I never seemed to have the time for it."

"Our presidents never do," Elkins answered, chuckling. "Yes, it might have helped. There's no woman you're interested in now?"

"No, none. I told you there was a lack of affect."

"Hum. Well, you only have to hold on until the 20th of January, when your successor takes office."

"I know; I'm thankful for the twenty-fourth amendment. Otherwise, I'm afraid some of my party cohorts might have wanted me to run again."

THE NURSE had come in. She helped Dr. Elkins roll up his sleeves and start his surgical scrubbing; she got the tray of instruments from the autoclave, started sterilizing the region over the president's chest muscles. Under Dr. Elkins' direction, she put a gauze mask over the president's nose and saturated it with anaesthetic.

"Inhale," the doctor told the president. He laid a strip of gauze over his patient's eyes; his other hand had gone around to the back of the president's head.

"Inhale," he said once more. "Deeper."

Deeper. His hand moved. "Until you feel dizzy. That's fine. Yes."

"Things are getting black," President McIvor remarked; "it's not unpleasant."

"Fine; that's the way we want things. Inhale again." His hand made a plucking motion at the back of his patient's head. "There."

"You ought to feel better now," Elkins told the president half an hour later. "Your chest may be a little sore for a day or two, but you don't have to slow down on your usual activities. Mind you don't go fooling with the bandage; I'll change the dressing tomorrow myself."

The president got up from the operating table and began putting on his clothes. "I don't feel at all sick or dizzy," he observed.

"No, you wouldn't. I mean, we have good anaesthetics these days."

"Remember what I said about the bandage."

"All right—Ouch!"

"What's the matter?" Elkins asked, leaning forward.

"Stepped on something." The president turned the sole of his bare foot upward and examined it. "How did that get there?" he asked.

"Probably came from the autoclave," Elkins answered. He reached over, pulled the bit of steel from the foot, and dropped it into the waste basket. "As I was saying, don't tamper with the bandage."

"O. K."

THE OPERATION on the president's chest was performed early in December. For a time, his feelings of depression and weariness lifted; but as the month progressed, and the pressure of his official duties increased, depression and weariness returned with crushing force. He had never felt so tired before.

Elkins met his complaints with nods and wise silences. Other physicians were called in; he was sent to



the hospital for a series of tests. In the end, the verdict was what Elkins had been saying all along; that McIvor's symptoms, for a man in this position, were only natural. Nothing could be done.

There was a policy-making cabinet meeting on December 24th. As the others were leaving, McIvor said to Atwood (Dept. of Defense, his oldest friend), "Hal, I'm going to have to resign."

Atwood's jaw dropped. "You mean—from the presidency?" He sounded very surprised.

"Yes; I don't think I can keep going any longer, Hal. Elkins and the other doctors can't do anything."

"But—it's only a few days longer. If you resigned now, the vice would have to take over, and you know what *he* is. Can't stick it out, for the country's sake?"

"I'm not sure it's for the country's good to have me continue in office; I can't remember things."

For a moment Atwood was very still. "What things?" he asked.

"My past—my boyhood; going to school; my friendship with you; the campaign—all the things that used to

be so clear, the things that used to matter. I can't remember anything clearly that happened before I became president. Things are leaving me; I'm losing my *self*."

Atwood's face cleared. "You're under a great strain, Mac. But I can assure you that your decisions and actions, in official matters, were never better than they've been during the last month. I watched the way you handled the servo-mechanisms enabling act. There never was a more painful, bristly, difficult issue. The way you dealt with it was nothing short of masterful. Impartial, statesmanlike. No man alive could have done as well."

"Oh. But I—Oh."

"It's only a few days more—less than a month. Elkins thinks you can do it, doesn't he?"

"Yes. But..."

"You've got to." Atwood leaned forward earnestly, his eyes entreating. "Won't you stick it out, Mac? Just a little while longer! For the country's sake."

"...All right."

HE STOOD it, somehow. In a depression so profound that it was almost palpable, he went through his official round, vetoed, recommended, consulted with the senators of his party, made decisions and speeches. The days were an ordeal of increasing bitterness; he marked them off on his calendar like a man counting time in prison. And then it was the night of January 19th.

McIvor was alone in his study. He had been alone most of the day—though, of course, there were the two secret service men on guard outside the study door. His hands rested idly on the desk in front of him. It seemed to him that it was the first time in four years his hands hadn't held something—a pen, a book, a report, a document. They were empty now.

What was going to become of him? He had been looking forward so ea-

gerly to tonight, the end of his ordeal, that he hadn't tried to look beyond it. But what would life be like tomorrow? What could happen to an ex-president?

The secret service man outside the door gave a soft cough. —He could, McIvor thought, go back to the little town where he had been born (he couldn't remember its name, exactly, but it was in Kansas...or Nebraska ...he could easily find out) and go on living there the rest of his life.

Going back to the town where he had been born was what one would expect an ex-president to do. It seemed to him that he had heard that Willis—the man who had been president four terms before his own—was still living, a very old man, in a small Ohio town. He couldn't remember what had happened to the men who had held office in between Willis' term and his own, though. Perhaps they were still living in obscure country places, wearing out the time between now and their death by practicing a little law.

He had practiced law himself once, he was almost sure. Before he had been president.

He rubbed his hands over his eyes. He was very tired—so tired that movement was painful—but he couldn't sit quietly at his desk any longer. He got up and began to pace around his study. The big, handsome room had been the place where most of his waking hours for the last four years had been spent. And yet, at this moment, it seemed to him he had never been in it at all.

Up and down he walked, over the pile of the soft, deep carpet. Once more the secret service man on guard coughed discreetly. It occurred to ex-President McIvor that what he wanted, in simplest terms, was not to have to go on living. But to kill oneself was strictly forbidden. It was a good thing that this was so; he would not have gone on living, otherwise.

There was no sound of footsteps outside, only the guard's soft, repeated

cough. But the study door opened without any warning and two men came in.

EX-PRESIDENT McIvor turned toward them, faintly surprised. He was not alarmed—it was only that in the four years of his office no one had ever walked in the study unannounced.

It was Elkins and another man—one McIvor did not recognize. The stranger was carrying what looked like a rolled-up cloth stretcher, and there was a bag of mechanics' tools in Elkins' hands. They were both dressed in dark, heavy cloth.

McIvor looked at them for a moment without understanding. Then his face cleared; he realized who they were, and what they had come for. He realized why, after his operation, there had been a steel nut on the operating room floor.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said with formal politeness. "I am glad to see you. Will it take long?" He had begun to smile.

"Not so long, sir," Elkins answered. He spoke with deep respect.

"I am glad of that. I have been in much distress...but you know that."

"Yes, Mr. President." Elkins cleared his throat. He seemed to have no more words.

"Shall I sit down in the chair?" McIvor asked, still smiling.

"Yes, please," Elkins answered gratefully. "With your back to us, sir; it will be easier that way."

McIvor seated himself in the desk chair. The green-shaded lamp made a quiet pool of light on the dark mahogany surface of the desk. He leaned forward a little, so as to expose his neck.

There was a clink of tools behind him. He said, "I suppose the reason you didn't tell me was that my knowing would have impaired my ability to handle the job?"

"Yes, Mr. President." It was the stranger who spoke. He had a very

deep voice. "You would never have carried on, if you had known. The whole country knew it, of course, except you; that's the law. Ever since the non-partisan act was passed, in 1970, all the presidential candidates, and all our presidents, have... have been like you."

McIVOR NODDED. "Because we're more impartial, I suppose. My pre-presidential memories were synthetic?"

"Yes. As time passed and new circuits were formed, they tended to fade out."

There was a click. "How do you feel now, sir?" Elkins asked. "Are you in less distress? Paul and I have shut off your visual apparatus."

"Yes, less distress," McIvor answered. "There's a layer of gauze between me and—what I've been suffering."

There was another clink from the bag of tools. Elkins said, "Now we've

eliminated the sense of touch, and balance; you're sure you're more comfortable?"

"Yes. This is more gauze. And agreeably thick."

"I'm glad of that, sir. The next will take a little longer. We don't want to cause you any pain; what we are going to do is to eliminate hearing, movement, and mental activity."

"You're very kind," McIvor answered. "That's the last of all, isn't it? After that I'll be—dead?"

"Your machinery will be stopped," Elkins answered; "you could call it that, sir."

"You are very kind," the ex-President repeated. "Please be quick."

It took them nearly three-quarters of an hour more to dismantle him completely. He was an extremely intricate mechanism. Then the two mechanics put the pieces of the ex-President of the United States in the cloth stretcher and carried them respectfully down the White House service stairs.

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Society had to protect itself against
people with delusions—people who
could make their delusions work!

MISADJUSTMENT

by PHILIP K. DICK

(Author of "The Unreconstructed M")

illustrated by ED EMSH

WHEN RICHARDS got home from work he had a secret little routine he went through, a pleasant series of actions that brought him more satisfaction than his ten-hour workday at the Commerce Institute. He tossed his briefcase into a chair, rolled up his sleeves, grabbed a squirt-tank of liquid fertilizer, and kicked open the back door. Cool late-evening sunlight filtered down on him as he stepped gingerly across the moist black soil to the center of the garden. His heart thudded excitedly; how was it coming?

Fine. Growing bigger every day.

He watered it, tore off a few old leaves, spaded up the soil, killed a weed that had edged in, squirted fertilizer at random, and then stepped back to survey it. There was no satisfaction like that of creative activity. On the job he was a high-paid cog in the niplan economic system; he worked with verbal signs, and somebody else's signs at that. Here, he dealt directly with reality.

Richards squatted on his haunches and surveyed what he had accom-

plished. It was a good sight; almost ready, almost fully grown. He leaned forward to poke cautiously at the firm sides.

In the dwindling light of day the high-velocity transport glittered dully. Its windows had already formed: four pale squares in the tapered metal hull. The control bubble was just starting to burgeon from the center of the chassis. The jet flanges were full and developed. The input hatch and emergency lock hadn't grown into existence, yet; but it wouldn't be long.

Richards' satisfaction rose to fever-pitch. No doubt about it: the transport was almost ripe. Any day now he could pick it . . . and start flying it around.

At nine the waitingroom had been full of people and cigaret smoke; now, at three-thirty, it was almost empty. One by one the visitors had given up and departed. Discarded tapes, bulging ashtrays, empty chairs surrounded the robot desk industriously grinding out its mechanical business. But in one corner, sitting bolt upright, her small hands clasped around her purse, re-

They took one look at the
plant, then fled, screaming.



mained a last young woman the desk hadn't been able to discourage.

The desk tried once more. It was getting close to four; Eggerton would soon be leaving. The gross irrationality of waiting for a man about to put on his hat and coat and go home grated against the desk's sensitive nerves. And the girl had been sitting there since nine, eyes large and wide, gazing at nothing, not smoking or examining tapes, only sitting and waiting.

"Look, lady," the desk said aloud, "there's nobody going to see Mr. Eggerton today."

The girl smiled slightly. "It'll only take a minute."

The desk sighed. "You're persistent. What do you want? Your firm must do a spectacular business with jobbers like you—but as I said, Mr. Eggerton never buys anything. That's how he got where he is, by throwing people like you out. I suppose you think that figure of yours is going to get you a big order." The desk added peevishly, "You ought to be ashamed, wearing a dress like that. A nice girl like you."

"He'll see me," the girl answered faintly.

THE DESK whizzed forms through its scanner and searched for a double-entendre on the word *see*. "Yes, I suppose with a dress like that," it began, but at that moment the inner door lifted and John Eggerton appeared.

"Turn yourself off," he ordered the desk; "I'm going home. Set yourself for ten; I'll be late tomorrow. The id bloc is holding a policy level conference in Pittsburgh, and I have a few things to say to them while they're together."

The girl slid to her feet. John Eggerton was a huge, ape-shouldered man, shaggy and unkempt, his jacket hanging open and food-stained, sleeves rolled up, eyes deep-set and dark with industrial cunning. He peered at her warily as she approached.

"Mr. Eggerton," she said, "do you

have a moment? There's something I want to discuss with you."

"I'm not buying and I'm not hiring." Eggerton's voice was gruff with fatigue. "Young lady, go back to your employer and tell them if they want to show me something to send around an experienced representative, not a kid just out of..."

Eggerton was nearsighted. It wasn't until the girl was almost to him that he saw the card between her fingers. For a man of his size he moved with astonishing agility; with one leap he knocked the girl aside, dashed around the robot desk, and disappeared through a side exit from the office. The girl's purse clattered to the floor, its contents spilling wildly. She hesitated between them and the door, then with an exasperated hiss, rushed from the office and out into the hall. The express elevator to the roof showed red; it was already on its way up fifty stories to the building's private field.

"Damn," the girl said. She turned and reentered the office, seething with disgust.

The desk had begun to recover. "Why didn't you tell me you're an Immune?" it demanded. Its outrage grew—the indignation of a bureaucrat. "I gave you form s045 to fill out and line six distinctly asked for specific information on your occupation. You—*deceived* me!"

The girl ignored the desk and knelt down to collect her things. Gun, magnetic bracelet, intercom neck-mike, lipstick, keys, mirror, small change, handkerchief, the twenty-four hour notice intended for John Eggerton... she was going to get hell when she appeared back at the Agency. Eggerton had even managed to avoid oral acknowledgment: the spool of recording tape spilled from her purse was blank and useless.

"You've got a clever boss," she said to the desk, in a burst of wrath. "All day sitting here in this reeking office

with all these salesmen for nothing."

"I wondered why you were so persistent," the desk said. "I never saw a saleswoman so persistent; I should have known something was wrong. You almost got him."

"We'll get him," the girl said, on her way out of the office. "Tell him that tomorrow, when he shows up."

"He won't show up," the desk answered; to itself, since the girl was gone. "He won't ever come back here, not now. Not with you Immunes hanging around. A man's life is worth more than his business, even a business this size."

The girl entered a public vid booth and dialed the Agency. "He skipped," she said to the grim-faced woman who was her immediate superior. "He didn't touch the summons-card; I guess I'm not much of a server."

"Did he see the card?"

"Of course; that's why he bolted."

The older woman scratched a few tentative lines on a note pad. "Technically, we have him. I'll let our lawyers battle it out with his heirs; I'm going ahead with the twenty-four hour notice, just as if he accepted it. If he was wary before, he'll be impossible from now on; we'll never get closer than this. It's too bad you muffed this..." The woman decided. "Call his home and give his personal staff the notice of culpability. Tomorrow morning we'll release it over the regular newsmachines."

Doris broke the circuit, held her hand over the screen to clear it, and then dialed Eggerton's personal number. To the attendant she gave the formal notice that Eggerton was legal prey for any niplan citizen. The attendant—mechanical—dutifully took the information as if it had been an order for so many dozen yards of cloth. Somehow, the machine's calmness made her more discouraged than ever. She left the booth and wandered gloomily downramp to the cocktail bar to wait for her husband.

JOHN EGGERTON didn't seem like a parakineticist. Doris' mind imagined small wan-faced youths, withdrawn and agonized, buried in out-of-the-way towns and farms, hidden away from urban areas. Eggerton was prominent...but of course that didn't affect his chance of being picked up in the random check-net. As she sipped her Tom Collins, she tried to think of other reasons why John Eggerton would ignore his initial check notice, then his warning—fine and possible imprisonment—and now this, his last notice.

Was Eggerton really P-K?

Her face in the dark mirror behind the bar wavered, rings of half-shadows, nebulous succubi, a gloom of fog like that which lay over the niplan system. Her reflection might have been that of a young female parakineticist: black circles for eyes, moist lashes, dank hair around her thin shoulders, fingers too tapered and too sharp. But it was only the mirror; there were no distaff parakineticists. At least, none reported yet.

Unnoticed, her husband came up beside her, tossed his coat over a stool, and seated himself. "How did it come off?" Harvey asked sympathetically.

Doris started in surprise. "You scared me!"

Harvey lit a cigaret and attracted the attention of the bartender. "Bourbon and water." He turned mildly to his wife. "Cheer up—there're other mutants to track down." He tossed her the foil from the afternoon newsmachines. "You probably know already, but your San Francisco office picked up four in a row. All of them unique; there was one party who had a sweet little talent of speeding up metabolic processes in those he didn't care for."

Doris nodded absently. "We heard through the Agency memos. And one could walk through walls, without falling through floors. And one animated stones."

"Eggerton got away?"

"Like lightning—I wouldn't think a

man that big would react that fast. But maybe he isn't a man." She spun her tall cold glass between her fingers. "The Agency is going to give the public twenty-four hour notice. I've already called his home... that gives his personal staff a head start."

"They ought to have it. After all, they've been working for him; they ought to have first crack at the bounty." Harvey was trying to be funny, but his wife didn't respond. "You think a man that big can hide out?"

Doris shrugged. The problem was simple with the ones who hid; they gave themselves away by departing more and more from the behavior norm. It was the ones unaware of their innate difference, those who kept on functioning until discovered by accident... the so-called *unconscious* P-K's had forced into existence the random check system and its Agency of female Immunes. In Doris' mind, the weird thought crept that a man might not be P-K and think he was—the timeless neurotic fear that one was somehow different, odd-ball, when in fact one was quite normal. Eggerton, for all his industrial power and influence, might be an ordinary human being suffering from a gnawing phobia that he was P-K. Such had happened... and there were genuine P-K's wandering around blithely unaware of their alienness.

"We need a sure-fire test," Doris said aloud. "Something an individual can apply on himself. So he can be certain."

"Don't you have it? Can't you be positive when you get hold of them in your net?"

"If we get hold of them. One out of ten thousand. Too damn small a number come up in the nets." Abruptly she pushed away her drink and got to her feet. "Let's go home. I'm hungry and tired; I want to go to bed."

Harvey gathered up his coat as he paid the tab. "Sorry, honey, We're

going out for dinner tonight. A fellow in the Commerce Institute, a man named Jay Richards. I met him at a luncheon... as a matter of fact, you were along. We're all invited over to celebrate something."

"Celebrate what?" Doris demanded irritably. "What do we have to celebrate?"

"Something secret of his," Harvey answered, as he pushed open the wide street door. "He's going to spring it on us after dinner. Cheer up—it may be good for an evening's entertainment."

EGGERTON did not fly directly home. At high velocity he circled aimlessly near the first ring of residential syndromes at the edge of New York, his mind ebbing first with terror, then with outrage. His natural impulse was to head for his own lands and houses, but fear of running into more Agency servers paralyzed his will. While he was trying to make up his mind, his neck—mike came on with the relay of the Agency's call.

He was lucky. The girl had given the twenty-four hour notice to one of his robots; and robots weren't interested in bounty.

He landed on a randomly-selected roof field within the industrial area of Pittsburgh. No one saw him: lucky again. He was trembling as he entered the descent elevator, and began the trip down to the street level. With him were crowded a blankfaced clerk, two elderly women, a serious young man, and the pretty daughter of some minor official. A harmless clump of people, but he wasn't fooled; at the end of twenty-four hours any and all of them would be panting for his hide. And he couldn't blame them: ten million dollars was a lot of money.

Theoretically, he had a one-day grace period; but final notices were badly-kept secrets. Most higher-ups were undoubtedly in on it; he'd approach an old friend, be welcomed, wined and

dined, given a cabin-shelter on Gany-mede and plenty of supplies—and be shot between the eyes as soon as the day was up.

He had remote units of his own industrial combine, of course; but they'd be checked off systematically. He had a variety of holding companies, dummy corporations, but the Agency would run through them if they considered it worth their time. The intuitive realization that he could easily become an object lesson to the niplan system, manipulated and exploited by the Agency, drove him to a frenzy. The female Immunes had always tripped deep-buried complexes built up in his mind from early infancy; the thought of a matriarchal culture was vitally abhorrent to him. And to pick off Eggerton was to unfasten a basic pivot of the bloc; now it occurred to him that his number on the random check might not really be random after all.

Clever—compile the identifying serial numbers of the id bloc leaders, revolve them in the check-nets from time to time, gradually eliminate them one by one.

He reached the street level and stood undecided, as urban traffic flowed around him noisily. Suppose the id bloc leaders simply cooperated with the check-nets? Compliance with the initial notice meant only a routine mind-probe by the protected corps of mutants society sanctioned, the telepathic *castrati* tolerated because of their usefulness against other mutants. Pulled at random or by design, the victim could simply permit the probe, lay his mind bare to the Agency, let the battleaxes claw and peck over the contents of his psyche, and then return to his office, cleared and safe. But this posited one item: that the industrial leader could pass the probe, that he was not P-K.

Sweat stood out on Eggerton's heavy forehead. Wasn't he, in a roundabout way, telling himself that he *was* P-K? No, that wasn't it. The issue was a

principle; the Agency had no moral right to probe the half-dozen men whose industrial bloc was the mainstay of the Niplan system. On that point every id bloc leader agreed with him... an attack on Eggerton was an assault on the bloc itself.

Fervently, he prayed they *would* see it that way. He hailed a robot taxi and ordered: "Get me over to the id bloc hall. And if anybody tries to halt you, fifty dollars says keep going."

THE VAST, echoing hall was dark and gloomy when he reached it. The meeting wouldn't begin for several days, yet; Eggerton wandered aimlessly up and down the aisles, between the rows of seats where the technological and clerical staffs of the various industrial units would be placed, past the steel and plastic benches where the leaders themselves sat, up finally to the vacant speaker's stand. Faint lights glowed for him as he halted vaguely before the marble stand. The futility of his position came to him with a rush: standing here in this empty hall, he momentarily comprehended how completely he had made himself an outcast. He could yell and shout and nobody would appear. He could summon up nobody and nothing; the Agency was the legal government of the niplan system. In tilting with it he had placed himself against all organized society—powerful as he was he couldn't hope to defeat society itself.

He left the hall hurriedly, located an expensive restaurant, and enjoyed a lavish dinner. Almost feverishly, he downed immense quantities of scarce imported delicacies; at least he could enjoy his last twenty-four hours. As he ate he gazed apprehensively at the waiters and the other diners. Bland, indifferent faces—but very soon they would see his number and image on every newsmachine. The great hunt would be on; billions of hunters after one quarry. Abruptly, he finished his

meal, examined his watch, and left the restaurant. It was six in the evening.

For an hour he squandered himself furiously in a swank bed girl mart, going from one apartment to the next, only half-seeing the occupants. He left behind a chaos—for which he paid; and then abandoned the frenetic turmoil for the fresh air of the evening streets. Until eleven he wandered through the dark star-lit parks that surrounded the residential area of the city, among other dim shadows, his hands stuffed miserably in his pockets, hunched over, wretched. Somewhere far off a city clock-tower radiated an audio time signal. The twenty-four hours were leaking out and no one could stop them.

At eleven-thirty he halted his purposeless wanderings and pulled himself together long enough to analyze his situation. He had to face it: his only chance lay back at the id bloc hall. The technological and clerical staffs wouldn't have begun to show, but most of the leaders would be staking out preferred living quarters. His wristmap showed that he had drifted five miles from the hall. Suddenly terrified, he made his decision.

He flew directly back to the hall, landed on the deserted roof field, and descended to the floor of living quarters. It couldn't be put off: it was now or never.

"COME IN, John," Townsend invited good-naturedly, and then his expression changed as Eggerton briefly outlined what had taken place in his office.

"You say they've already sent the final notice to your home?" Laura Townsend asked quickly. She had got up from the couch where she had been sitting and come immediately to the door. "Then it's too late!"

Eggerton tossed his overcoat to the closet and sank down in an easy chair. "Too late? Maybe... too late to avoid the notice; but I'm not giving up."

Townsend and the other id bloc leaders came around Eggerton, faces showing curiosity, sympathy, and traces of cold amusement. "You've really got yourself into something," one of the leaders said. "If you'd let us know before the final notice was sent out maybe we could have done something. But this late..."

Eggerton strangled as he felt the boom being lowered down around him. "Wait," he said thickly, "let's get this straight. We're all in this together; it's me today and you tomorrow. If I fold under this—"

"Take it easy," murmured voices came, "Let's work this out rationally or not at all."

Eggerton lay back against the chair as it adjusted to his tired body. Yes, he was glad to work it out rationally.

"As I see it," Townsend said quietly, leaning forward, his fingers pressed together, "it's not really a question of *can* we neutralize the Agency. Collectively, we're the economic battery of the niplan system; if we draw the props out from under the Agency it collapses. The real question is—do we *want* to write off the Agency?"

Eggerton croaked wildly: "Good God, it's either us or them! Can't you see they're using this net-check and probe system to undermine us?"

Townsend glanced at him and then continued for the benefit of the other leaders. "Perhaps we're forgetting something. *We* set up the Agency in the first place; that is, the id bloc before us worked out the fundamentals of random net-check inspection, use of tame telepaths, the final notice and hunt—the whole works. *The Agency is for our protection*; otherwise parakineticists would grow like weeds and finally choke us off. Of course, we must keep control of the Agency... it's our instrument."

"Yes," another leader agreed. "We can't let it get on our backs; Eggerton is certainly right, there."

"We can assume," Townsend continued, "that some mechanism must exist at all times to detect P-K's. If the Agency goes, something must be constructed in its place. Now I tell you what, John." He gazed thoughtfully at Eggerton. "If you can think of a substitute, then maybe we'll be interested. But if not, then the Agency stands. Since the first P-K back in 2045, only females have shown immunity. Whatever we set up will have to be operated from a female policy-board...and that's the Agency all over again."

There was silence.

DIMLY, in Eggerton's mind, the ghosts of hope flickered. "You agree the Agency is on our backs?" he demanded huskily. "All right, we have to assert ourselves." He gestured around the room futilely; the leaders were watching stonily and Laura Townsend was quietly pouring coffee into half-empty cups. She shot him a glance of mute sympathy and then turned back to the kitchen. Cold silence cut down around Eggerton; he settled unhappily back in his chair and listened to Townsend drone on.

"I'm sorry you didn't inform us that your number had come up," Townsend was saying. "On the first notice we could have done something, but not now. Not unless we want to have a showdown at this time—and I don't think we're prepared for that." He pointed his authoritative finger at Eggerton. "You know, John, I don't think you really understand what these P-K individuals are. You probably think of them as lunatics, people with delusions."

"I know what they are," Eggerton answered stiffly. But he couldn't keep himself from saying, "Aren't they people with delusions?"

"They're lunatics who have the power to actualize their delusional systems in space-time. They warp a limited area around them to conform to

their eccentric notions—understand? *The P-K makes his delusion work.* Therefore in a sense it isn't a delusion...not unless you can stand far enough back, get a long way off and compare his warped area with the world proper. But how can the P-K himself do that? He has no objective standard; he can't very well get away from himself, and the warp follows him wherever he goes. The really dangerous P-K's are the ones who think everybody can animate stones, or change themselves into animals, or transmute base minerals. If we let a P-K get away, if we let him grow up, reproduce, have a family, a wife and children, we let this inherited parafaculty spread...it becomes a group belief...it becomes a socially institutionalized practice.

Any given P-K is capable of spawning a society of P-K's built around his particular power. The great danger is this: eventually we non-P-K's may become the minority...our rational world-view may come to be considered eccentric."

Eggerton licked his lips. The dry, languid voice made him sick; as Townsend spoke the ominous chill of death settled over him. "In other words," he muttered, "you're not going to help me."

"That's right," Townsend said, "But not because we don't *want* to help you. We feel that the danger from the Agency is less than you imagine; we consider the P-K's the real menace. Find us some way we can detect them without the Agency, and we'll go along with you—but not until then." He leaned close to Eggerton and tapped him on the shoulder with a lean, bony finger. "If females weren't clear of this stuff, we wouldn't stand a chance. We're lucky...we could be a lot worse off than we are."

EGGERTON got slowly to his feet. "Goodnight."

Townsend also rose. There was a moment of strained, awkward silence. "However," Townsend said, "we can beat this hunt and chase rap they have on you. There's still time; the public notice hasn't been put out, yet."

"What'll I do?" Eggerton asked hopelessly.

"You have the written copy of your twenty-four notice?"

"No!" Eggerton's voice cracked hysterically. "I ran out of the office before the girl could give it to me!"

Townsend pondered. "You know who she is? You know where you can find her?"

"No."

"Make inquiries. Trace her down, accept the notice, then throw yourself on the mercy of the Agency."

Eggerton spread his hands numbly. "But that means I'll be bonded to them for the rest of my life."

"You'll be alive," Townsend said mildly, without emotion of any kind.

Laura Townsend brought steaming black coffee over to Eggerton. "Cream or sugar?" she asked gently, when she was able to attract his attention. "Or both? John, you must get something hot under your belt before you go; it's such a long trip back."

THE GIRL'S name was Doris Sorrel. Her apartment was listed under the name Harvey Sorrel, her husband. There was no one there; Eggerton carbonized the door-lock, then entered and searched the four small rooms. He rooted through the dresser drawers, tossed clothing and personal articles aside one after another, systematically rifled the closets and cupboards. In the waste disposal slot by the work desk he found what he was looking for: a not-yet incinerated note, crumpled and discarded, a jotted notation with the name Jay Richards, the date and the time, the address, and the words, *if Doris isn't too tired*. Eggerton put the note in his coat pocket and departed.

It was three-thirty in the morning when he found them. He landed on the roof of the squat Commerce Institute Building and descended the ramp to the residential floors. From the north wing light and noise came: the party was still in session. Praying silently, Eggerton raised his hand to the door and tripped the analyzer.

The man who opened the door was handsome, gray-haired, a heavy man in his late thirties. A glass in one hand, he gazed blankly at Eggerton, his eyes blurred with fatigue and alcohol. "I don't remember inviting—" he began, but Eggerton pushed past him and into the apartment.

There were plenty of people. Sitting, standing, keeping up a low murmur of talk and laughter. Liquor, soft couches, thick perfumes and fabrics, shifting color-walls, robots serving hors d'oeuvres, the muted cacophony of feminine giggles from darkened side-rooms... Eggerton slid off his coat and moved aimlessly around. She was there somewhere; he glanced from face to face, saw only vacant, half-gazed eyes and slack mouths, then abruptly left the livingroom and entered a bedroom.

Doris Sorrel was standing at a window gazing silently out at the lights of the city, her back to him, one arm resting on the window sill. "Oh," she murmured, turning a little. "Already?" And then she saw who it was.

"I want it," Eggerton said. "The twenty-four hour notice; I'll take it, now."

"You scared me." Trembling she moved away from the wide expanse of window. "How—long have you been here?"

"I just came."

"But—*why*? You're a strange person, Mr. Eggerton. You don't make sense." She laughed nervously. "I don't understand you at all."

FROM THE gloom the figure of a man emerged, briefly outlined in the

doorway. "Darling, here's your martini." The man made out Eggerton, and an ugly expression settled over his half-stupefied face. "Move on, buddy; this isn't for you."

Shakily, Doris caught his arm. "Harvey, this is the man I tried to serve today. Mr. Eggerton, this is my husband."

They shook hands icily. "Where is it?" Eggerton demanded bluntly. "You have it with you?"

"Yes...it's in my purse." Doris moved away. "I'll get it. You can come along, if you want." She was regaining her composure. "I think I left it around here, somewhere. Harvey, where the hell's my purse?" In the darkness she fumbled for something small and vaguely shiny. "Yes, here it is. On the bed."

She stood lighting a cigaret and watching, as Eggerton examined the twenty-four hour notice. "Why did you come back?" she asked. For the party she had changed to a knee-length silk shirt, copper bracelets, sandals, and a luminous flower in her hair. Now the flower drooped miserably; her shirt was wrinkled and unbuttoned, and she looked dead-tired. Leaning against the bedroom wall, cigaret between her stained lips, she said: "I don't see that it makes any difference what you do. The notice will be out publicly in half an hour—your personal staff has already been notified. God, I'm exhausted." She looked around impatiently for her husband. "Let's get out of here," she said to him, as he wandered up. "I have to go to work tomorrow."

"We haven't seen it," Harvey Sorrel answered sullenly.

"The hell with it!" Doris grabbed her coat from the closet. "Why all this mystery? My God, we've been here five hours and he hasn't trotted it out yet. Even if he's perfected time travel or squared the circle I'm not interested, not this late."

As she pushed her way through the

crowded livingroom, Eggerton hurried to catch up with her. "Listen to me," he gasped. Holding onto her shoulder he continued rapidly, "Townsend said if I came back I could throw myself on the mercy of the Agency. He said—"

The girl shook loose. "Yes, of course; it's the law." She turned angrily to her husband who had scrambled after them. "Are you coming?"

"I'm coming," Harvey answered, bloodshot eyes blazing with indignation, "But I'm saying goodnight to Richards. And you're going to tell him it's *your* idea to leave; I'm not going to pretend it's my fault we're walking out. If you haven't got the social decency at least to say goodnight to your host..."

The gray-haired man who had let Eggerton in broke away from a circle of guests and came smilingly over. "Harvey! Doris! Are you leaving? But you haven't seen it." Dismay flooded his heavy face. "You *can't* leave."

Doris opened her mouth to say that she damn well could. "Look," Harvey cut in desperately, "can't you show it to us now? Come on, Jay; we've waited long enough."

Richards hesitated. More people were wearily getting up and clustering over. "Come on," voices demanded, "let's get it over with."

After a moment of indecision Richards conceded. "All right," he agreed; he knew he had stalled long enough. Into the tired, experience-satiated guests a measure of anticipation trickled back. Richards raised his arms dramatically; he was still going to milk what he could from the moment. "This is it, folks! Come on along with me—it's out back."

"I WONDERED where it was," Harvey said, following after his host. "Come on, Doris." He seized her arm and dragged her after him. The others crowded along, through the dining-room, the kitchen, to the back door.

The night was ice chill. Frigid wind blew around them as they shivered and stumbled uncertainly down the black steps, into the hyperborean gloom. John Eggerton felt a small shape push into him: as Doris savagely yanked away from her husband, Eggerton managed to follow after her. She rapidly shoved through the mass of guests, along the concrete walk to the fence that enclosed the yard. "Wait," Eggerton gasped, "listen to me. Then the Agency will take me?" He was powerless to keep the thin edge of pleading from his voice. "I can count on that? The notice will be voided?"

Doris sighed wearily. "That's right. Okay, if you want, I'll take you over to the Agency and get action on your papers; otherwise they'll sit there for a month. You know what it means, I suppose. You're indentured to the Agency for the balance of your natural life; you know that, I suppose. Do you?"

"I know."

"Do you want that?" She was distantly curious. "A man like you... I would have thought otherwise."

Eggerton twisted miserably. "Townsend said—" he began pathetically.

"What I want to know," Doris interrupted, "is why you didn't respond to your first notice? If only you'd come around... this never would have happened."

Eggerton opened his mouth to answer. He was going to say something about the principle involved, the concept of a free society, the rights of the individual, liberty and due process, the encroachment of the state. It was at that moment that Richards snapped on the powerful outdoor searchlights he had rigged up especially for the occasion; for the first time, his great achievement was revealed for everyone to see.

For a moment there was stunned silence. Then all at once they were screaming and milling from the yard.

Wild-faced, dazed with terror, they scrambled over the fence, burst through the plastic wall surrounding the yard, crashed into the next yard and onto the public street.

RICHARDS STOOD dumbfounded beside his masterpiece, bewildered and not yet understanding. In the artificial white glare of the searchlights the high-velocity transport was a thing of utter beauty. It was fully formed completely ripe. Half an hour before, Richards had slipped outside with a flashlight, inspected it, and then, trembling with excitement, had cut the stem from which the ship had grown. It was now separate from the plant on which it had formed; he had rolled it to the edge of the yard, filled the fuel tank, slid back the hatch, and made it ready for flight.

On the plant were the embryonic buds of other transports, in various stages of growth. He had watered and fertilized with skill: the plant was going to turn out half a dozen jet transports before the end of the summer.

Tears dribbled down Doris' tired cheeks. "You see it?" she whispered wretchedly to Eggerton. "It's—lovely. Look at it; see it sitting there?" Agonized, she turned away. "Poor Jay... when he understands..."

Richards stood, feet planted apart, gazing around at the deserted, trampled remains of his yard. He made out the shapes of Eggerton and Doris; after a moment he started hesitantly toward them. "Doris," he choked brokenly, "*what is it? What did I do?*"

Suddenly his expression changed. Bewilderment vanished; first came brute, naked terror as finally he understood what he was, and why his guests had fled. And then crazed cunning fell into place. Richards turned clumsily and began lumbering across the yard toward his ship.

Eggerton killed him with a single shot at the base of the skull. As Doris

began screaming shrilly, he shot out the searchlights one by one. The yard, Richards's body, the gleaming metal transport, dissolved in the frigid gloom. He shoved the girl down and forced her face into the wet, cold vines growing up the wall of the garden.

She was able to get hold of herself, after a time. Shuddering, she lay pressed against the mashed grass and vines, arms clutched around her waist, trembling back and forth in an aimless rocking motion that gradually drained itself away.

Eggerton helped her up. "All these years and nobody suspected. He was saving it up—his big secret."

"You'll be all right," Doris was saying, so low and faint that he could hardly hear her. "The Agency will be willing to write you off; you stopped him." Weak with shock, she groped blindly in the darkness for her scattered purse and cigarettes. "He would have got away. And that *plant*. What are we going to do with it?" She found her cigarets and lit up wildly. "What about it?"

Their eyes were growing accustomed to the night gloom. Under the faint sheen of starlight the outline of the plant came dimly into focus. "It won't live," Eggerton said. "It's part of his delusion; now he's dead."

FRIGHTENED and subdued, the other guests were beginning to filter back into the yard. Harvey Sorrel crept drunkenly from the shadows and apologetically approached his wife. Somewhere far off the wail of a siren sounded; the automatic police had been called. "Do you want to come with us?" Doris asked Eggerton shakily. She indicated her husband. "We'll all drive over to the Agency together and get you straightened out; it can be fixed up. There'll be some kind of indenture, a few years at the most. Nothing more than that."

Eggerton moved away from her. "No

thanks," he said. "I have something else to do. Maybe later."

"But—"

"I think I have what I want." Eggerton fumbled for the back door and entered Richard's deserted quarters. "This is what we've been looking for."

He put through his emergency call immediately. In Townsend's apartment the buzzer was sounding within thirty seconds. Sleepily, Laura roused her husband; Eggerton began talking as soon as the two men were facing each other's image.

"We have our standard," he said; "we don't need the Agency. We can pull the rug out from under them because we don't really need them to watch us."

"What?" Townsend demanded angrily, his mind fuzzy with sleep. "What are you talking about?"

Eggerton repeated what he had said, as calmly as possible.

"Then who *will* watch us?" Townsend growled. "What the hell is all this?"

"We'll watch each other," Eggerton continued patiently. "Nobody will be exempt. Each of us will be the standard for the next man. Richards couldn't see himself objectively, but I could—even though I'm not *immune*. We don't need anybody over us, because we can do the job ourselves."

Townsend reflected resentfully. He yawned, pulled his night-robe around him glanced sleepily at his wristwatch. "Lord, it's late. Maybe you have something, maybe not. Tell me more about this Richards... what sort of P-K talent did he have?"

Eggerton told him. "You see? All these years... and he couldn't tell. But we could tell instantly." Eggerton's voice rose excitedly. "We can run our own society, again! Consensus gentium—we've had our measuring standard all the time and none of us has realized it. Individually, each of us is fallible; *but as a group we can't go wrong*. All we have to do is make sure the

random check-nets get everybody; we'll have to step the process up, get more people and get them oftener. It has to be accelerated so that everybody, sooner or later, gets hauled in."

"I see," Townsend agreed.

"We'll keep the tame telepaths, of course; so we can get out all the thoughts and subliminal material. The teeps won't evaluate; we'll handle that ourselves."

TOWNSAND nodded dully. "Sounds good, John."

"It came to me as soon as I saw Richards' plant. It was instantaneous—I had complete certitude. How could there be error? A delusional system like his simply doesn't fit into our world." Eggerton's hand slammed down on the table in front of him; a book that had belonged to Jay Richards slipped off and landed soundlessly on the thick carpet of the apartment. "You understand? There's no equation between a P-K world and ours; all we have to do is get the P-K material up where we can see it. Where we can compare it to our own reality."

Townsend was silent a moment, "All right," he said at last. "Come on over. If you convince the rest of the id bloc then we'll act." He made his decision. "I'll get them out of bed and over here."

"Fine." Eggerton reached quickly for the cut-off switch. "I'll hurry over; and thanks!"

He rushed from the littered, bottle-strewn apartment, now dismal and deserted without the celebrating guests. In the backyard, the police were already picking around, examining the dying plant that Jay Richards' delusional talent had brought into momentary existence.

The night air was cold and crisp, as Eggerton emerged from the ascent ramp, onto the roof field of the Commerce Building. A few voices drifted up from far below; the roof itself was deserted. He buttoned his heavy overcoat around him, extended his arms, and rose from the roof. He gained altitude and speed; in a few moments he was on his way toward Pittsburgh.

As he flew silently through the night he gulped vast lungfuls of the clean, fresh air. Satisfaction and rising excitement raced through him. He had spotted Richards immediately—and why not? How could he miss? A man who grew jet transports from a plant in his backyard was clearly a lunatic.

It was so much simpler just to flap one's arms.



INFORMATION PLEASE!

In recent months, we have received many requests from you, our readers, for long novels in *Science Fiction Stories*. This is understandable, since it is only in the true book-length novel that many science fiction themes can be developed fully, with adequate attention to character portrayal, background detail, and so on. We'd like very much to offer you novels.

In order to do so, however, such stories would have to be run as serials—and two months between installments is much too long a wait, even for readers who are willing to wait for the next issue to continue a story.

We would like you to vote, therefore, on these two questions:

(1) Would you like to see book-length serials in *Science Fiction Stories*?

(2) Would you like to see *Science Fiction Stories* go to a monthly schedule?

Please send a postcard, or letter, to SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York, and register your wishes on this matter. Do it today, for we must have a large number of votes before we can make a decision of such importance.

—The Editor



BEMA

by WALLACE WEST

(author of "The Time Lockers")

For the benefit of newcomers: a BEM is a bug-eyed monster, such as used to be seen on almost any science fiction cover. BEMA, as Mr. West explains, is the female of the species, of course. But ... most important of all ... we now have the inside dope on who BEMS really are!

DR. SMITH stooped to brush snow out of Falla II's shaggy coat and remained in that position to take a last look at the White House roses blooming behind the iron bars of the fence. They had clung to their glory throughout most of December, but this storm would frost them by morning, poor things.

"Don't bite your toes, girl," he said firmly as they continued their evening "constitutional" along Executive Avenue. "I'll clean out the ice when we get home."

Falla obeyed without question, as she had been taught to do in behavior school; but she was limping badly by the time they passed the YMCA and were turning north up 18th Street.

Mr. Smith looked longingly at the all night hamburger stand where he habitually stopped for coffee after his day's work in the White House library. Eddie would have let him bring Falla in and clean her up properly. But Eddie had quit and gone to parts too distant even to think about; George, his replacement, would be stuffy about dogs in restaurants.

He glanced through the steamy plate glass window of the enameled "tower" and stopped so quickly that Falla bumped into him. Square white cap pushed far back on his narrow head, Eddie himself was deep in perusal of a sports page.

"You're back!" shouted Mr. Smith as he slammed inside with more enthusiasm than he had displayed since the election of Teddy Roosevelt.

"Course," said Eddie with a wide and freckled grin as he folded the paper neatly to its front page and placed it on a pile awaiting sale. "Fellow's gotta work and this is my favorite spot. Right in the center of things."

"But I thought..." Mr. Smith stammered. "I mean, three months ago you went off with that girl you called Captain.... You said you were going home...."

"Did." Eddie pushed a cup of black coffee toward his friend and put two hamburgers on the grill. "Vacation. Had a helluva time. Boy, how the old place has changed. The sanfunzies are a thousand feet wide, now, and..." He stopped with a great bobbing of his Adam's apple. "Say! Falla's got ice balls between her toes again. Let me fix her up." He was under the counter and at work before Mr. Smith could protest.

Although it must have hurt, the dog submitted to his ministrations without a whimper.

"She behaves a lot better than she did when she got in this fix last winter," said Eddie, as he finished. "That time she tried to bite me."

"I sent her to a behavior school," said Mr. Smith proudly. "Had to. She kept waking the neighbors at ungodly hours with her barking; can't have that in a furnished room."

"Sent her to school!" Eddie sucked in his thin cheeks while his green eyes twinkled. "Which one?"

"It's run by a woman named Sim-lungi or something equally outrageous. "She looks a lot like you, come to think of it."

"Should," the boy grinned. "She's my kissin' kin.... Cousin or something."

"It's a small universe, as you once said," Mr. Smith mumbled around a mouthful of bun, hamburger and cat-sup. (Falla was feasting daintily on the second cake which Eddie had transferred to a paper plate and placed on the floor. "Say, I sold that story we wrote together."

"Story?"

"Yes. The one about what became of the dinosaurs. (*) Here's your part of the swag." Mr. Smith fished in a change purse and brought out several carefully folded bills.

"Gee. Thanks. But this is too much. You did all the writing."

"Fifty-fifty, Eddie. We agreed on that.... Now, how about us going to work on another one—maybe a yarn dealing with your trip to far places?"

"Nah. Who wants to read about Bugeyed Monsters these days? Let's try a spy story. This Egyptian situation...."

"People who work in the White House don't write spy stories," Mr. Smith said gently. "We'd better stick to science fiction."

"But look! If we wrote a thriller about what caused the Egyptian war scare to peter out, and just before Christmas, too...."

"No, Eddie. I'd rather try a new twist on your BEMS."

(*) "Labor of Love". *Future Science Fiction*, No. 29.



All BEMS aren't the really horrible kind of monsters."

"Old hat," said his friend. "It's coming up 1957, the year of the IGY. I still say...." His eyes went slack. He poured himself half a cup of coffee and drank it scalding. "Mr. Smith, was a story ever written about BEMAS?"

"BEMAS?"

"Yeah. Female BEMS. Did they ever get any publicity?"

AS MR. SMITH was racking his memory back to the days of H. G. Wells, the restaurant door swung open. A policeman entered, beat the snow off his slicker, appropriated a newspaper, and departed with a mere grunt of thanks.

"BEM!" snorted Eddie as he got out a mop and cleaned up the mess.

"Never heard of a single BEMA," said the librarian at last. "Guess authors took it for granted that monsters multiply by parthogenesis."

"Huh!" jeered Eddie. "Their education's been neglected. 'Why, on vacation, I...' He clapped a hand over his big mouth and looked appre-

hensively at Falla. She licked her hairy chops in a heaven of surfeit, but sat up to beg for another handout.

"It's a BEM's universe, as well as a small one," the counterwoman began again. "But, like Kipling says, the 'female of the species is more deadly', one way or another, whether she lives on Earth or Arcturus III." He reached for another paper and studied the headlines. "Maybe we could write that spy story about those neglected BEMAS."

"Tell on!" Mr. Smith got out pencil and pad.

"This will be just an outline, sort of. You can fill in the details... Did you ever figure out why all this 'brink of war' stuff hasn't quite jelled into real shooting these last few years?"

"Well," said Mr. Smith judicially, "I've read that since both we and the Russians have developed A and H-bombs we're both stymied. Even trigger-happy generals have too much sense to try imitating the gingham dog and the calico cat, I guess."

"Hah!" cried Eddie. "Gingham dog!

You're getting warm. But what about the little cool wars where they wouldn't use H-bombs? Ever since Korea, people have been making faces across back fences; but nothing really happens? Why?"

"I give up."

"BEMAS!" Eddie almost shouted.

"I don't follow you."

"Look. It's easy. BEMS, being males, just dote on fighting. And it doesn't matter whether or not they have seven horns and ten tails, the way it says in the Bible. I'm a BEM." He bugged his eyes. "Everyone's a BEM to everyone else except maybe to his closest relatives and best friends."

"Down where I came from, in Tennessee, we say that all strangers are 'tacky,'" Mr. Smith agreed with a sigh.

"That's right. Leave it to the collective BEMS and the most we'll ever accomplish will be to learn how to swing from the Milky Way by our tails while we throw atomic cocoanuts at each other...I read in my Britannica once that Freud called it 'the death wish'."

"Eddie, you still amaze me," said Mr. Smith; "another hamburger, please."

"But there's a 'life wish', too. And who has most of it?"

"Uh, the BEMAS?" Mr. Smith hazarded. "Females protect the race from extinction?"

"Right the first time. I think you're developing a touch of telepathy."

"**EVERYBODY'S** a bit of a telepath, I've read," said Mr. Smith modestly. "But what's this got to do with gingham dogs and Egyptian politics?"

"More than you'd guess...Do you know when those dog behavior schools we were talking about become all the rage?"

"First one was started shortly after World War II, seems to me."

"O.K. O.K.!" Eddie leaned so far

over the counter that his long nose almost brushed Mr. Smith's. "And who started it?"

"Search me."

"My Cousin, that's who." Eddie slammed the new hamburger on the counter for emphasis.

"So?"

"So a dog is man's best friend, isn't he? So he may do a spot of fighting himself when the spirit moves, but did you ever see a dog egg his master into a scrap? He'll have fits. ...Grab him by the pants leg. Do anything to keep him out of a mixup, even at the risk of his life. Right?"

"Right." Mr. Smith leaned down to pat Falla's head.

"Only," said Eddie, "a dog can't talk; and he can't write peace propaganda. That's why he barks and howls at the silent moon o' nights. He's frustrated; or rather, he was frustrated until about ten years ago.

"That where my Cousin Simlungi comes in...You should see her, by the way, when she's not in costume. That long bushy tail. That lovely pelt!" He caught himself up short. "What in the name of sin am I talking about? You can't put that kind of stuff in a story."

"You must have been sampling some heady stuff during your trip," Mr. Smith grinned.

"Heady stuff. Yeah. That's it! Just like I said. Cousin got the idea she could teach dogs to exert more influence. (Dog's think *they're* the real people, you see. They're convinced that humans are their pets.) so she started this first school in San Francisco about the time the United Nations was being organized out there.

"Her place got a big writeup in the papers. A lot of American and foreign big shots became interested. Carried the word home with them: No more dogs chasing automobiles, or tearing up the bed, or barking their hearts out at 2 a.m. Instead, pooches that come to heel when you tell 'em, help maiden

ladies across streets, and that sort of thing.

"Behavior schools caught on in a big way after that, all over the world, and Cousin had to call for help to run 'em.... She had trouble in the Mohammedan world at first. They didn't care much for dogs, infidel or otherwise. But since the oil royalties have started rolling in, the upper classes are adopting western vices.... and dogs.... and behavior schools, at a great rate."

"And the BEMAS....?" Mr. Smith prompted.

"Well, nobody noticed that their dogs had been altered a little. And nobody is aware, even today, that, the more thousands of dogs that are trained, the more the war scares seem to dwindle."

REGRETFULLY, Mr. Smith put away his notebook. "I'm afraid this idea's not so hot, Eddie."

"Gee. Why not?" The counterman scratched his flaming crew cut.

"Dog's as good will ambassadors!"

"But dogs always have a lot of influence. Anyone will tell you a boy should own a dog because it builds character. It's a matter of sym.... symby...."

"Symbiosis."

"Yeah. We help them; they help us. And they've been helping humans 'most as long as I have, you can say in the story."

Mr. Smith got out his pad again.

"Speaking of influence," said Eddie, "you once told me we should put the colonial peoples and the nigras back in their places, the way they used to be when you were a boy down South. That correct?"

"Yes." Mr. Smith looked uncomfortable. "I did talk some such nonsense."

"Still think the same way?"

"No!" The librarian was getting red behind the ears now.

"Why not?"

"Oh, come now, Eddie!" Mr. Smith paid his bill with trembling fingers, pushed his bowler down to his ears, and got up to go. "A joke's a joke!"

"Falla?" Eddie said quietly.

The Scottie cocked an ear and a bright eye.

"What did Cousin teach you to keep thinking about, girl?"

Like smoke through damp leaves, words swirled into Mr. Smith's mind: "Peace on earth; good will to men, dogs, and BEMIS."

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LOUIS H. SILBERKLEIT
(Signature of publisher)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 5th day of October, 1955.

(My commission expires March 30, 1958.)

MAURICE COYNE
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SCIENCE

in Science Fiction

A Series of Special Articles

The Tie That Binds

by Richard H. Macklin, Ph.D.

I ALWAYS LIKE a good fight, and this series of articles certainly seems to have started one. Letters have come in both pro and con. The "pros"—like Victor Endersby, whose letter appeared in the November issue—are of the general opinion that science-fiction writers should have some kind of examination to make sure they know their science; the "cons" all want to know: "What the devil are you trying to do? Ruin our faith in science fiction?"

In order to clarify my position, I'll explain how this series came about.

Some time back, I wrote a letter to Mr. Lowndes, explaining what I thought was good and what I thought was bad in the field of science fiction, and *why* I thought so. Your editor rejected the letter, saying, in essence: "This isn't complete enough. Do a series of articles, and quote chapter and verse."

I was a little nervous about the idea at first; scientists are not primarily authors. But I tackled the job any-

way, because I did have something to say, which is this:

Science fiction has done an excellent job in the past, in that it has interested a good many people in science. But it has erred in that it has attempted to teach people science.

Self-contradictory? Not at all. As long as people who read speculative fiction realize that it *is* speculation, they won't be misled by an author's honest errors. But when it is claimed that science fiction *teaches science*, the author becomes an authority, and the reader begins to swallow pseudo-science along with the rest.

So—am I trying to ruin your faith in science fiction? Well, if your faith is such that you think your favorite magazine will teach you as much as a good textbook, the answer is a resounding *Yes!* I am trying to ruin it. On the other hand, if you believe that science fiction is a method of speculative prophecy in some cases and sheer entertainment in others, then my answer is an equally resounding *No!*



They float through the air with the greatest of ease — but how solid is the scientific basis for it?

That's my position, and I'm attempting to prove it.

EVER SINCE Man developed his forebrain, he has realized that if he dropped something, it fell. Man thought about this phenomenon for a long time, but not until the advent of Sir Isaac Newton in the seventeenth century did anyone find a method of predicting how fast and how far it would fall.

Newton's Law of Gravitation is—or should be—familiar to all:

Between any two bodies in the universe, there is an attractive force which is directly proportional to the product of their masses, and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between the two.

Albert Einstein, in the early part of this century, formulated field equations which, although more complicated, give almost the same answer under ordinary conditions.

Of course, one thing must be pointed out: Neither these men, nor anyone else, has attempted to say what gravity *is*; they have merely formulated what it *does*.

But, alas, all too many authors of science fiction have shown themselves to be totally unfamiliar with the laws of gravity and inertia, and their relationship to mass and energy.

Jules Verne, rightly called the Father of Science Fiction, made some horrible errors in that direction. In his *Journey To The Center Of The*

Earth, (Ace Books, 1956) he puts his heroes in a cavern so far underground that gravitational effects on the rock above them would produce enough pressure to make rock actually flow; no such cavern could exist. The same thing holds true for the Pellucidar of Edgar Rice Burroughs: a hollow in the center of the Earth would long ago have collapsed in upon itself.

Verne pulled another gravitational bloop in his "Off On A Comet, or Hector Servadac", in which a comet brushes Earth, scoops off a small chunk of north Africa, and heads back into space—and the hero, who is on the lifted section of real estate, doesn't even know it! When it was reprinted in the April 1926 (Vol. 1, No. 1) issue of *Amazing Stories*, Hugo Gernsback had to apologize for the error, admitting that

If . . . the comet had even a hundredth part of the size and solidity and weight which Verne confers upon his monster so as to give his travelers a home—in that case the collision would be unspeakably disastrous—especially to the unlucky individuals who occupied the exact point of contact.

But T. O'Connor Sloane, who succeeded Gernsback, made no such apologies for "The Laughing Death" (*Amazing Stories*, April 1931), and its sequel, "Worlds Adrift" (*Amazing Stories*, May 1932) by Stephen G. Hale. In fact, he said that the latter was "scientifically plausible and very convincingly told".

The idea was this: an atomic-driven machine designed for drilling holes in the Earth goes wild and starts chewing around and around the Earth and finally cuts it in half and the two halves drift apart..

Drift apart! By all that's holy, I do not see how anyone could imagine that two masses a few hundred feet apart and having a total mass of six thousand million million metric tons could drift apart! Even supposing that they could be cut apart in the first

place, they would fall toward each other immediately with a roar heard round the world.

It seems to be the magnitude of the thing that blinds everyone. Since it's difficult to visualize the Earth being sliced in two, one tends to reduce it to imaginable proportions and think of an apple being cut in two. But suppose that Mount Everest were sliced off at its base with some sort of disintegrator ray. Do you think it would go drifting off into the sky, never to be seen again? Do you?

George O. Smith, in his "Two Worlds For One" (*Future Combined With Science Fiction Stories*, July-August 1950), tried the same stunt. He has the mad genius scientist cut the moon in half, but at least he used a "gravity screen" between the halves, which kept them apart. We'll go into gravity screens another time.

AND THEN there are the orbit jugglers. As a prize of this type, I submit for your consideration "Warriors of Space" by James P. Marshall (*Science Wonder Stories*, June 1929).

Having been invaded by Evil Beings from Saturn's satellite Dione, the Intrepid Earthmen decide that the war must be carried to the Awful Things' home. By anchoring a tractor beam—which is what it amounts to—the sun, and another to Saturn, they are going to pull Saturn into Sol. A government bigshot objects that there isn't enough power to do the job. The hero replies:

"You have seen scales delicately balance, with perhaps a huge weight on either side. It takes but a fraction of an ounce to disturb that balance. The universe is like that, each member nicely balance by opposing forces. We have but to strengthen one of those forces on one member and the balance of that member will be destroyed, making it move as the stronger force directs."

(The peculiar use of the word "balance" is the author's doing, not mine.)

They don't even think of just tossing Dione into the sun; evidently that's too simple for Great Minds. Of course, there's the matter of getting there, and, if I may digress a moment from the subject of gravity, I'd like to quote again:

"You have eight hundred million miles between you and your objective, a distance so great that with light traveling at one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second it takes over seventy hours for a beam to travel from that planet to us."

And, later on:

"Remember...we cannot see movement of that planet until nearly three whole days after it has actually moved. It will take that long for its light rays to reach us."

Brother! Actually, at their greatest distance from each other, during conjunction, when Earth is on one side of Sol and Saturn is on the other, light takes approximately one hour and twenty minutes to make the trip. But go ahead and figure it out for yourself.

And when they finally do drag Saturn to its doom, it takes them several days to get there at *infinite speed!* As Roosevelt remarked, "I do not see how even Herr Goebbels could have thought up that one."

But let's get back to the gravitational aspects of the story; there's almost enough to make Immanuel Velikovsky cringe.

Since the actual relative position of the two planets aren't stated in the story, it's a little difficult to figure out what's happening; but evidently the hero was so stupid that he actually dragged Saturn within a short distance of Earth—a million miles or so. The moon begins to spin faster on its axis, and storms of tidal waves rage over the Earth.

"The earth is sinking; the moon is turning; the whole universe is changing!"

But that doesn't last long, only a few days.

Then one day as they were standing fearfully at the telescope watching, fascinated, the brilliant electrical display of the sky, the strange motion of the earth to which they had almost become accustomed, ceased. The moon, too, became still, a new face shining down on the awe-struck world.

All this, if you please, in Volume One, Number One of *Science Wonder Stories*, in which Hugo Gernsback states editorially:

There has been altogether too much pseudo-science fiction of a questionable quality in the past. Over-enthusiastic authors with little scientific training have rushed into print and unconsciously misled the reader by the distortion of scientific facts to achieve results that are clearly impossible....

It is a guarantee to our readers that they will not get a false scientific education through the perusal of these stories.

NOW LET'S get one thing straight. The Solar System is *not* a delicate mechanism like a watch; it is *not* a structure like a Roman arch. The removal of any of the planets, or indeed all of them (with the obvious exception of Earth), wouldn't permanently disturb anybody but the astronomers.

On the other hand, if a planet like Saturn were to be pulled close enough to Earth to disturb it in the way described, Earth would then follow it into the sun or be put into such an eccentric orbit that life could no longer exist on it.

And the moon, once it started rotating more rapidly, would *not* slow down again—unless another force were brought to play upon it. The energy required to changed a dynamically stable system has to come from outside that system. It is just a illogical for a planet to low down of its own accord as it is for it to speed up.

(By the way, when I say "outside the system", I mean energy not in use *within* the system. If the sun were to explode, the energy would certainly

change the Solar System, but the locked-up atomic energy in the heart of the sun is "outside the system".)

As an example, take "Ten Million Miles Sunward" by Geoffrey Hewelcke (*Amazing Stories*, March 1928).

A comet several hundred times the size of Earth is hurtling through space toward our planet. It isn't the collision that worries people, though; it seems that a comet is

...a thing composed of flaming gases, the heat from which will kill everything on earth, weeks before it hits, and when that happens, the earth will simply dissolve into its component solids and gases and will be incorporated into the comet.

Of course, a comet is *not* composed of flaming gases; Earth passed right through the tail of Halley's comet in 1910, and the luminous partial vacuum didn't bother us a bit. And no comet is even as big as the moon, much less a hundred times as big as the Earth—but let that pass, too.

The plan is to shift the Earth from its orbit, and thus dodge the oncoming horror, and is to be carried out by digging a canal from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea, allowing water to pour into the Caspian, which is below sea level. This would move several million tons of water, which "would be enough to alter the orbit of the Earth".

Gernsback noted that the story had a flaw, and in the April 1928 issue, W. J. Luyten of Harvard Observatory pointed out the flaw.

Astronomically speaking, the thing is totally unsound; it is entirely impossible to change the course of the Earth...by doing anything from the Earth itself.

He goes on to say that if the water were moved rapidly enough, it might slow down the earth's rotation a little and make the day a few seconds longer, but after the Caspian had been filled, the error would correct itself.

Personally, I doubt it; after all, the tides shift much greater masses of water completely around the Earth every day, and the length of our rotational period is slowed only by fractions of second per century.

But, in the story, it works. The comet narrowly misses Earth—somehow doing so without disturbing our planet too much, in spite of its mass—and goes shooting off toward the sun. But the worst is yet to come, scientifically speaking.

Its speed was so great, that, although it actually passed through some of the sun's gaseous emanations, it never swerved aside from its course and continued on, and out of the solar system, unregretted by the world.

Anything that can pass through the sun's corona without being diverted from its course is just a hallucination and not worth worrying about in the first place. I *knew* there was something funny about that comet!

ANOTHER orbit juggler is A. W. Bernal's "Cosmic Menace" (*Amazing Stories Quarterly*, Summer 1931). The Solar System is about to be engulfed by a gigantic interstellar dust cloud. Where it came from is unexplained; any dust collection of the density of this one would have been collapsed into a stellar mass very quickly due to its own internal gravitation. And it can't be very large, because it was invisible to the Terrestrial telescopes until six years before the story starts, and is only moving at a relative velocity of about four thousand million miles per year, or about a hundred miles per second—which isn't very fast when you're trying to cover interstellar space. That cloud couldn't have been as dangerous as it seemed, but the boys are afraid of it, anyway.

Their solution is to dig a pit in Brazil, load it full of atomic fuel, and blast the Earth out of its orbit, thus escaping the Cosmic Menace.

Now it happens that the "parabolic

velocity," or escape velocity, of the Earth's orbit is 26.1 miles per second. To achieve this velocity would require an acceleration of 32 ft/sec² for a little less than an hour and twelve minutes. That's one gravity of acceleration, which would tear the Earth to smithereens if applied in so small an area as the story described. But Mr. Bernall applied the force in a single gigantic explosion! Let's give the author plenty of leeway and say that the explosion took one minute. That's an acceleration of *seventy-two gravities!*

What do you think *that* would do to poor old beat-up Terra?

There are other orbit-shifting stories which pull the same sort of thing. Arthur J. Burks' "Earth the Marauder" (*Astounding Stories Of Super-Science*, July, August, September 1930) has a magical gimmick which swishes the Earth off into space by shifting the internal balance of the planet; in "The Comet Doom" by Edmond Hamilton (*Amazing Stories*, January 1928), some fiends inhabiting another one of those comets attempt to pull Earth into the comet. It doesn't sound as though that would be too healthy for the cometeers, but that's their business.

"Wandl, the Invader" by Ray Cummings (*Astounding Stories* February, March, April, May, 1932) and E. E. Smith's "Gray Lensman" (*Astounding Science Fiction*, October, November, December, 1939, January 1940) and several others, use machines of such superscientific power and scope that they can be classed as "magic"; they can't be attacked on scientific grounds.

ONE OF THE things that has never ceased to confuse people is the difference between the terms *mass* and *weight*; so let's get them straight.

Weight is a measure of the gravitational attraction between two bodies. Your weight is the measure of the force of attraction between your body and the

Earth. When I stand on a scale, the pointer will register about 160 pounds; that means that the Earth and I are pulling each other with a force of 160 pounds. Naturally, the amount of pull depends on the mass of both bodies. If either one is changed, the force changes. Thus, my five-year-old son, having less mass than I, has a mutual attraction with the Earth of fifty pounds; if I were on the moon, the force would be around 27 pounds, because the moon is less massive than the Earth.

Weight, then, requires two bodies attracting each other gravitationally. This force will depend entirely on the masses of the two bodies and how far apart they are. Remember Newton's Law?

Mass is the amount of matter in something, and is measured by the resistance a body has to moving. Mass is totally indifferent to weight; it doesn't require another body anywhere near it. No matter where you go, your mass remains the same; no matter where it may be, a given mass has the same resistance to change of motion. This resistance is called *inertia*.

Let's take an example. Suppose you have a railroad freight car, equipped with well-lubricated roller bearings on a smooth, level track. With a little effort, a reasonably healthy man can get it started moving—slowly at first, then picking up speed as he keeps pushing. Pretty soon, it's going along as fast as he can keep it going with very little effort.

It's easy to move, once he gets it started, but *first he had to overcome the inertia*.

Now, suppose he wants to stop it. He runs up to the front of the car, and holds out his hand. It knocks him down and runs over him. Why? Because he will have to apply as much energy to stop the car as he did to start it! Again, inertia. Was it the weight that knocked him down? No; the *weight* of the car is

pressing down on the rails. it was the mass that did the dirty work.

So, how does this apply in science fiction?

On the cover of the July 1929 *Science Wonder Stories*, there is a picture of a man in a seaman's uniform holding up the transatlantic liner *Leviathan*—at that time the largest ocean liner afloat, with a displacement of some sixty thousand tons. The cover illustrates the editorial by Mr. Gernsback, in which he shows that if one could transport the *Leviathan* out to some asteroid made of ordinary rock, and with a diameter of 116 feet, the gravitational pull would be so little that the *Leviathan* would only weigh 200 pounds, and if the rock were still smaller, the ship could be lifted with one hand, as the cover shows.

Well, that's all right, as far as it goes, but remember that railroad car? Suppose you strapped your feet to the asteroid and started trying to lift the *Leviathan*. On the scale, it only weighs a few pounds; if you had it on your shoulders, you could stand there all day. But overcoming its inertia is an entirely different matter because the mass hasn't changed.

After much strenuous pushing, you might get it over your head—and then it would just keep on going! You don't think a ship is easier to stop than a boxcar, do you?

So you wave goodbye to the *Leviathan* as your ship sinks slowly in the sun.

And that's exactly what would have happened to Mason, in Laurence Manning's "The Wreck of the *Asteroid*" (*Wonder Stories*, February 1933), when he attempted to carry the spaceship *Asteroid* around Phobos, the inner moon of Mars. Granted, the ship might only weight ten pounds, but its mass would be just as great as ever.

Stories which contain scenes taking place under the influence of little or no



gravitational pull will suffer from the mass-weight confusion to a greater or lesser extent. "The Shot Into Infinity" by Willi Gail (*Science Wonder Quarterly*, Fall 1929) is surprisingly good for its time; on the other hand, Hugo Gernsback's "Ralph 124C41+" (*Amazing Stories Quarterly*, Winter 1929) ignores the mass of things entirely. H. G. Wells, in his "First Men in the Moon" (*Amazing Stories*, December 1926, January and February 1927) merely seems a little confused at times.

ONE HATES to bite the hand that feeds one, so it is with great trepidation that I make any statements about a novel called *Mystery Of The Third Mine* by Robert W. Lowndes (John C. Winston Company, 1953, \$2.00); but, after all, we mustn't be chauvinistic, must we?

The action takes place in the asteroid belt, and throughout the book the author paid special attention to the mass-weight problem. In several places, a huge mass moves slowly, but inexorably.

One of the most striking of these is

the scene where a heavy piece of machinery with a mass of several tons is dropping on a man's head. It is

...drifting the way anything drifted from a height here, floating straight down, slowly, soundlessly, toward the two talking on the sidewalk.

Naturally, because of the tendency to leave the ground on the planetoid Ceres, the hero, who is trying to warn the man and woman standing beneath the falling mass, can't move very fast; also, the air beneath the dome is thin and carries sound poorly. So, by the time he warns them, the machine is almost on top of them. The girl manages to get away, but the man is crushed to death beneath the calculator unit.

Now it happens that the surface gravity of Ceres is approximately one thirty-second-that of Earth. (The acceleration of a falling body is thus about one foot per second per second. That means that an object weighing 3200 pounds on Earth would weigh 100 pounds on Ceres—but remember, the mass remains the same.

The author said "several tons"; that means more than two, obviously, so let's call it 6400 pounds for easy figuring, and let's drop it and find out what happens.

Suppose the Empire State Building were on Ceres, and the machine were dumped off the top of it. By the time it reached the level of the head of a man standing on the sidewalk below, it would be moving at only thirty miles an hour, and it would have taken around three-quarters of a minute to fall that distance. On Earth, neglecting air resistance, it would be moving at nearly two hundred miles an hour, and would have taken only a little over eight seconds to make the trip.

However, we don't have buildings like that on Ceres. Internal evidence indicates that the average building is about eleven stories high—around 112 feet. If dropped from such a structure on Ceres, the machine would be mov-

ing at around ten miles an hour when it hit and would require fifteen seconds to fall that distance.

If it were weight alone that determined the damage done, this would still be the equivalent of dropping a two hundred pound weight on a man from a point three feet above his head. I don't think I'd care to be under it.

But it isn't weight that counts here; it's mass. And that means that it's the equivalent of 6400 pounds of machinery coming down on your head at ten miles an hour. I know good and well I don't want to try *that*.

All very fine, but, alas, there's a flaw here nonetheless. The author apparently forgot that a falling body *accelerates*, whether the gravity is low or high, and wrote this scene as if the unit fell at a uniform rate from start to finish. Now the length of time for the unit to fall from the eleventh story would be about 15 seconds. At the start of its fall it would, indeed, seem to be "drifting" down; it would fall one foot in the first second. *But it would fall 14 feet in the last second*, and would be coming down at about ten miles an hour.

Thus (a) if the object was nearly on top of Menotti and the girl when Pete saw it, from across the street, they'd have been squashed before he could possibly attract their attention; (b) if the unit was "drifting", in appearance, then it would still be pretty near the top of the building. You can have it either way, but not both.

THERE'S a lovely little scene in the book where the local cops are tossed up into the air so that the hero and his pals can get away. Naturally, once the police are off the floor, they're helpless; they can't do anything until they touch the floor again. And with a good, hefty shove, they'd be up in the air, literally, for about half a minute—plenty of time for the boys to scam—providing that the

ceiling was about 112 feet high. Internal evidence indicates that the auditorium could have had that high a ceiling.

One other gravitational error in the book. In chapter 14, the hero and his friends lift and carry a rocketship *a la* "Wreck of the Asteroid." Could be, in both cases, but not as described in either. Well, none of us is perfect, and most of the gravitational thought is sound.

Another flub can be found in *Revolt on Alpha C* by Robert Silverberg (Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1955, \$2.00). One of the characters is talking about Alpha Centauri VII, which is described as a "sort of super-Jupiter"; in other words, a heavy planet with a high-density gravitational field.

"Two exploratory ships landed on VII about twenty years ago, but the pull of gravity was so strong they couldn't lift the

Sorry; no good. The energy re-ship up once it landed."

quired to land a ship on a planet is ex-

actly equal to the energy required to take it off. In other words, if they had the power to land, they had the power to get off. If they couldn't take off it was because they didn't have the energy, and therefore didn't land—they crashed! But if they didn't crack up, then they could have taken off.

Again, you can have it either way, but not both.

One other gravitational errors in the scientific thought—without error—behind it is Hal Clement's "Mission of Gravity" (*Astounding Science Fiction*, April, May, June, July 1953). There's no need for me to comment on it; just read Clement's own article on the subject, 'Whirligig World,' in the June 1953 *Astounding*.

If more people would write like that, maybe the field would be justified in claiming the title "science-fiction;" so far, all we have is a few lights in a murky fog. It's a situation to be viewed with utmost gravity.



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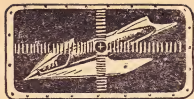
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FUTURE
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INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

A Department For The Science Fictionist

by Robert A. Madle

THE BIG SHOW—the new year-con in *Retrospect*: The very first world science fiction convention was held in New York in 1939. Attendance estimates range from 150 to 200; it was not held in a big hotel, but in a hall customarily utilized for weddings and similar social functions; one of the evenings there was a banquet, but very few attended—even at a dollar a plate. There was also a softball game, in which the Queens Science Fiction League soundly thrashed the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society; plenty of writers and editors were on hand—in fact, perhaps one-half of the attendees were professionals in some respect; there were innumerable speeches by notables of the s-f world. Fans from all over the nation met personally for the first time; and, also for the first time, reader, writer and editor sat down together and seriously discussed their mutual interest. The NYCON turned out to be the first in a long series of annual affairs, interrupted only during the war years of 1942-45.

It took seventeen years for the World Convention to return to New York. Internal dissension among the various fan cliques of the metropolitan area eliminated New York from serious consideration year after year. Finally, led by David A. Kyle, Art Saha, Sam Moskowitz, and others, a new unified group developed in the New York area. At Cleveland, in 1955, this group swept away all opposition and was awarded

the coveted prize—the right to hold another world convention in New York City.

Intent on making the 1956 convention a 100% democratic one, Dave Kyle polled the science fiction world on what type of affair they desired. Did they want a small, intimate convention—in a small hotel, with everything priced moderately? Or did the s-f world want "The Big Show"? The opinion of those who replied was overwhelmingly in favor of the latter. So "The Big Show" it would be! And "The Big Show" it was.

It all took place over the Labor Day weekend at the Hotel Biltmore. Approximately 900 attended (this figure is completely unofficial, as the official attendance has not, as yet, been released). Of the 900, we would venture a guess and say almost fifty percent were (as occurred in 1939) professionals in some sense of the word. In fact, there were so many celebrities in attendance, that the introductions were handled by an adept trio: Sam Moskowitz, Bob Tucker and Anthony Boucher. Even so they ran out of time and witty remarks long before all of the prominent names in the audience were called. Never before (and, perhaps, never again) have there been (or will there be) such a dazzling accumulation of the men and women who have molded science fiction into its present form. Space limitations prohibit the mention of more than just a cross-section of this vast throng of science fiction greats.

For instance, just about every professional

magazine editor was present. Off-hand, the following come to mind: John W. Campbell (ASTOUNDING), Paul Fairman (AMAZING), Hans Santesson (FANTASTIC UNIVERSE), Leo Margulies and Sam Merwin (SATELLITE), Larry Shaw (INFINITY), Anthony Boucher (FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION), Robert W. Lowndes (SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY), Bill Hamling (IMAGINATION), Ted Carnell (NEW WORLDS), Donald A. Wollheim (ACE NOVELS), and so on.

Almost-legendary figures of the dawn-age of s-f were present: Ray Cummings (who wrote "The Girl in the Golden Atom" away back in 1919); Edward Elmer Smith, whose "Skylark of Space" was also written in 1919, but not sold until after the advent of *Amazing Stories* in 1926); and Frank R. Paul, whose mind and brush conceived of many wonderfully alien scenes for almost three-decades and who, despite his more than seventy years, retains the ability to do great work today.

A few of the other notables present were the old world-saver himself, Edmond Hamilton, who was writing mighty-concept for *Weird Tales* before the first issue of *Amazing* appeared. Mrs. Hamilton was there also—most of you know Mrs. Hamilton by the name of Leigh Brackett, whose swash-buckling space epics have thrilled readers for quite some time; the author of "Nightfall" and the "Foundation" series, Isaac Asimov, whose plots have been utilized by many of Isaac's contemporaries, and who is a Doctor of Science; and who could be a professional nightclub entertainer; Theodore Sturgeon, who has been writing some of the best s-f output for about fifteen years, whose early stories were great, but whose current stories are better than his early ones; Lester del Rey, who has run the gamut of the s-f field—fan, writer and editor; and Robert Bloch, Frederick Pohl, James Blish, C. M. Kornbluth, Richard Wilson, Randall Garrett, Robert Silverberg, Frank M. Robinson, Harlan Ellison, Milton Lesser, ad infinitum.

THERE WERE speeches galore—by Campbell, L. Sprague de Camp, P. Schuyler Miller, Willy Ley, and Guest of Honor Arthur C. Clarke, whose discerning discussion of recent science fiction trends was one of the highspots of the entire affair. Panels of science fiction experts

were scattered all about the program; Glenn L. Martin Co. and the Vanguard Project were represented. Even the United States Air Force was in evidence with an impressive exhibit.

There was a movie, produced by the Philadelphia S-F Society, and there was a science fiction ballet; there was a cocktail party followed by a colorful costume ball; there was—but why go on?—Dave Kyle and the boys shot the works. There were just so many things and so many people involved that it is difficult, in retrospect, to place every function in its proper niche.

Yes, they put on "The Big Show"—but we will remember, long after "The Big Show" has been forgotten, the little personal sidelights of the affair—renewing old acquaintances with Forry Ackerman, Julius Unger, Rusty Hevelin; meeting Allen Glasser for the first time, and listening to his stories of the earliest days of Fandom; talking over s-f with Edmond Hamilton and wife, while having a cold beer; then having another with Bob Lowndes (who had the ulterior motive of transferring our first year of *Astounding* to his collection—but who failed, primarily because we didn't have said first year with us, despite the number of greenbacks proffered;) the big combination party of Bob Pavlat and the Ben Jason-Frank Andrasovsky duo—we think there were more people in those three rooms than were in attendance during some of the sessions; and we cannot neglect to mention the cordiality of Convention-Secretary Art Saha who found, somehow or the other, time for a cheery "Hello" despite being tied down with convention labor.

The Committee is to be congratulated for the many months of hard work expended. They all worked hard and continuously with one goal in mind: to make the Newyorcon the biggest convention of all time. It turned out big, too; the only convention in the same category was Chicago of 1952. In fact, it must be stated that, perhaps, it was too big—and became topheavy in its final stages of preparation.

We don't know how others feel about this, but the intense desire we always felt toward the ultimate "big" convention has waned. There is such a thing as being *too* big. And the Newyorcon exemplified this.

But away with criticism. As a whole, the convention was a success. And, as we did



program booklet, in itself, is worth the requested \$1, for it will, as has all previous ones, become a collector's item.) Send your \$1 now to The London Science Fiction Convention, 204 Wellmeadow Road, Catford, London, SE6, England. And why not think about attending?

THE FAN PRESS

ANYWAY you add them up, fifteen years is a long time. As the lifespan of *homo sapiens* is measured, it is almost a generation; it is sometimes the difference between juvenility and maturity; it can also mean the difference between maturity and senility. Whereas it is almost a generation lifespanwise, science-fictionwise it is an entire era. Today the authors and the stories they introduced in 1941 are being classified as the "Renaissance" period of science fiction. Fifteen years ago such writers as Robert A. Heinlein, A. E. van Vogt, Theodore Sturgeon, and Lester del Rey were at their peak. John W. Campbell was introducing a new type of "social" science fiction to the public. The era of the gadget was obsolete. And, in 1941, the first issue of *FANTASY TIMES* was published.

The years have sped by with astonishing alacrity, and during these years many hundreds of issues of *FANTASY TIMES* have appeared, in many types of format—all culminating in the current fifteenth anniversary issue. The cover is photo-offset, featuring photos of publishers James V. Taurasi and Ray Van Houten, and the FT staff of Sam Moskowitz, Forry Ackerman, Donald Ford, Stephen Takacs, and the other regulars. The initial ten pages present the usual FT news coverage, this time announcing the appearance of several new staff magazines, the death of Bela Lugosi, book reviews by Jim Blish, news columns by Ackerman, Don Wollheim, and Ray Palmer. The remaining thirty consist of a series of thought-provoking articles comparing various phases of science fiction today with 1941.

For sake of argument, take Ray Palmer's article. There is little doubt that when Palmer makes a statement, it is emphatically definite! Ray says today's s-f readers lack the enthusiasm and frenzied zeal of the oldtime reader. There is nothing, says Ray, which can work up this enthusiasm. He says, and we quote:

last year, for remote posterity we'd like to mention the names of those who worked to create the giant affair: David A. Kyle, Jean Carroll, Dick Ellington, Ruth Landis, Art Saba, George Nims Raybin, and all the others who assisted.

With the Newyorcon now history, it is time to look forward to 1957's convention—the first real *world* science fiction convention. Yes, by an overwhelmingly majority, London, England, will be the site for 1957's gala affair. Ted Carnell, Arthur C. Clarke, and contingent, came to New York determined not to leave without the official sanction of London tucked away in their collective pocket—and they succeeded. Everything is already set to go, and the convention machinery has been in motion for several months. The affair will be held at the Royal Hotel in London. E. J. (Ted) Carnell will be Chairman, ably assisted by such as Frank Arnold, Ken and Pamela Bulmer, Peter Hamilton, Ken Slater, and Walter Willis.

We can all help London get off to a flying start by joining the Convention Committee. This year the price tag has been reduced to only \$1, and this entitles you to all advance publicity, a membership card, and a copy of the program booklet. (The

The magazines and writers today are "cold fish". They are calculating penny-a-words. They work for a living. There are no Merritts, no Burroughs, or Weinbaums in the lot. And if there were, there are no editors who would dare recognize them!

Ray further states we must get rid of the familiar in science fiction. Keep way ahead of science, says Ray. If not, "... we have no science fiction, only science fact." This statement makes an interesting contrast with that of Arthur C. Clarke, speaking as Guest of Honor at the 1956 World Convention, when he said today's writer must interpret to the public today's happenings or near-happenings. Clarke's viewpoint expresses a belief, or hope, that contemporary mankind can be made s-f conscious. Ray Palmer holds out no such hope. Science fiction is for a small group of people—a group different, somewhat, from the ordinary run. Not Star-Begotten—just a bit out of the ordinary. Who knows? Maybe Ray's right. At least some recent trends in science fiction reading help prove his contention. Ray concludes by saying we should become raving zealots.

Robert W. Lowndes, in his article, "Cycles," talks of the 1941 boom period and the current boom-and-bust period. In 1941, RWL felt that the Tremaine "thought-variant" story was the ultimate in science fiction. He was slightly antagonistic toward John W. Campbell for changing AS-ROUNDING's policy away from the Tremaine concept-story to that of sociological prophecy. (The thought-variant story, of course, had died completely by 1941. The type of story, popularized by Campbell, reached its outer boundaries with the advent of GALAXY, and is now definitely on the wane.) Editor Lowndes mentions that he feels that s-f can possibly (some-time-somehow-somewhere) reach the status of mainstream literature and that he is, as much as possible, keeping this in mind as he edits his various s-f journals.

Dr. Thomas S. Gardner comes up with a complex sociological reason for the falling popularity of science fiction. It is not only s-f, but all types of reading matter which is on the wane, says Gardner. And, he adds, it is because we are entering another *dark age!* He points out that, in a dark age,

there is a separation between the thinkers and the non-thinkers—each group feeling itself to be right. Gardner displays how this separation exists today—anti-intellectualism, book-burning, and so on. Interesting theory.

There are numerous other articles this time, winding up with a complete history of FANTASY TIMES by science fiction's most meticulous and detailed historian, Sam Moskowitz.

The price of this issue is 25c, and it is highly recommended to all. If you have never read a fanzine, we can't think of a better introduction to the field. Address: Fandom House, PO Box 2331, Paterson 23, New Jersey.

THE SCIENCE FICTION ALPHABET (merely send a postcard to Allen Glasser, 241 Dahill Road, Brooklyn, New York, for a free copy). Allen Glasser, who has the distinction of being, perhaps, the world's first active science fiction fan (see SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY, November, 1956, for article on Glasser), has compiled an attractive little brochure consisting of two "science fiction alphabets." The first was written in 1933, and appeared in Charles Hornig's THE FANTASY FAN. The other was written just recently. It is interesting to compare the two, both of which are very cleverly constructed. Here is the past and present of science fiction in one little compact volume—and it's free for nothing.

SCIENCE FICTION PARADE (10¢ for a sample from Len J. Moffat, 5969 Lanto Street, Bell Gardens, California). Here, in ten terse mimeod pages, the entire field of science fiction is covered. PARADE is a fanzine pattern after those little 15¢ magazines we all read at the newsstands—only no nudes here. But, in this case, no nudes is good nudes. There is a feature article in the recent Westercon, and the remainder of the magazine consists of four features: "Books On Parade," "Prozines On Parade," "Films On Parade," and "Fanzines On Parade." we guess that covers it.

FRONTIER (published by the Society for the Advancement of Space Travel, Dale R. Smith, Editor, 3001 Kyle Avenue, Minneapolis 22, Minnesota. 50¢ for a sample.) Here is a nice-appearing little

journal for the astronaut. The organization, apparently a comparatively new one, appears to be more active than some of the more well-established outfits. At least their journal is peppy and full of interesting articles. No: only are the technical aspects of space travel stressed, but sociological implications are covered rather thoroughly. For instance, there was an article on educating the general public to space travel; one on theological aspects of interplanetary communication; and one on interplanetary travel as the next step in the perfection of man.

A BAS (25¢ from Boyd Raeburn, 9 Glenvalley Drive, Toronto 9, Canada). In direct contrast to the seriousness of **FRONTIER** is this bi-monthly bundle of whimsy, humor and satire. Boyd Raeburn has now produced eight issues, and there appears to be no end to his peculiar type of editorial talent. He always has his readers' desires at heart, to wit the following quote from his current editorial: 'Anybody who doesn't like it (A BAS) can refrain from reading it, but please don't tell me what I should or should not print.'

Following this "pep" editorial, we come to the "Derelecti Derogation," which is a regular feature, purporting to be a conversation between various personages prominent in the s-f world. Almost invariably there is a "fugghead" or two included so the sharp barbs of Raeburn's cudgel (yes, his cudgel has sharp barbs) can dig deep.

Bob Tucker, not to be outdone by Raeburn, comes up, this time, with his own "Dialogue," which condemns the nefarious activities of the Toronto group. Tucker, always a serious constructive fan, will have no more of this tomfoolery! An interesting, and really unusual, item for A BAS is the inclusion of what is alleged to be the last letter ever written by H. P. Lovecraft. It was addressed to Dr. Adolph de Castro and discusses, in part, Lovecraft's opinion of young Henry Kuttner.

Although some of the allusions in A BAS might mystify the non-initiate, it is recommended as a well-written, cleverly-illustrated, legibly mimeographed fanzine.

Send all fanzines for review to Robert A. Madle, 1620 Anderson Street, Charlotte 5, North Carolina.



2 Gripping Stories of Midnight Murder



GOOD BYE, TWO-TIME GAL!

by Daoma Winston

THE BLACK WIDOW

by Al McGarry

You'll find these, and many other stories in the February

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DETECTIVE and
MYSTERY STORIES

TIME TO STOP

A Vignette by Randall Garrett

M^{R.} OSWALD LATIMER leafed through the sheaf of papers that young Aghill had submitted and smiled at his student.

"Bob, I think you've done a marvelous job. You've done an excellent exposition on the subject of time travel into the future. Now, if your apparatus works according to theory, I have no doubt that you'll not only get your Doctorate, but the Nobel Prize."

Dr. Rumfort choked. "Ridiculous! Impossible! Time travel can not be justified mathematically!"

Dr. Latimer smiled at his student, then turned to glare at Dr. Rumfort. "Harry, I think you'd balk at anything if it didn't agree with your theories. Will you shut up? You're here as a witness, not as a Prosecuting Attorney! Please go on, Mr. Aghill."

Robert Aghill was a thin, sheepish-looking young man; he nodded obsequiously as he set his apparatus into motion. He flipped several switches and turned several rheostats. Finally, he pointed wordlessly toward a large plastic bubble that hung suspended in the middle of the lab.

After a moment, he found his voice. "There it is, sirs; a machine that will travel into the future."

Drs. Latimer and Rumfort stared at the machine. It looked like a ten-foot fishbowl which had been turned upside-down over a chair. Inside, it glowed with violet light.

Absolutely nothing else happened.

Rumfort, of course, was the first to find his voice. "Do you mean to say that that thing is supposed to be going into the future?"

All three men stood staring at the glowing globe of violet light.

Finally, Aghill said: "Yes sir; that field should project anything within it into the future."

"Bah! Hooey!" shouted Dr. Rumfort. "Let me look at those equations!" He grabbed at the thesis paper and looked it over while Latimer and Aghill watched.

Aghill, in a plea of self-preservation, looked at Dr. Latimer and said: "Please, sir! I *know* that thing's going into the future; I have—"

"AhhHA!" shouted Dr. Rumfort—he was fond of shouting—"There's the error!" He pointed at one line in the manuscript. "That's not an equation!" he snapped "that's an identity!"

Latimer took the paper from Rumfort's hand and looked at the indicated line. After a moment, he looked at young Aghill. "Robert, my boy, I'm afraid Dr. Rumfort is right; the equation *is* an identity."

A^GHILL grabbed at the paper and stared at it, a frown on his face. At last, a smile brightened his broad mouth. "I see. You're right, of course; but so am I. The equation shows the identity of applied power with the time flow. The apparatus is travelling into the future at the rate of one second per second!"

At that, Rumfort blew up. "And you call that a time machine? Hah! My dear boy, *everything* goes into future at the rate of one second per second. Look here!" He walked over to the inverted, ten-foot fishbowl, opened the door in its side and stepped in. "Presumably, I am within the time-travelling field now. And I am still here. I am moving into the future at the same rate I always was. The whole thing is stupid! Now suppose I shut it off—" He vigorously punched the cutoff button inside the globe.

Instantly, the violet glow within the globe vanished.

And with it vanished the chair, the control board, and Dr. Rumfort.

Latimer and Aghill stared at the empty plastic bubble. Aghill gulped audibly. "What happened? Where is Dr. Rumfort?"

Latimer looked again at the equations. "I'm afraid you asked the wrong question. According to your formulae, the machine propels things into the future at the rate of one second per second. When it's cut off, naturally, it stops propelling the things in its field. You shouldn't ask *where* Dr. Rumfort is, but *when*."

He glanced at his wristwatch. "I should say he's about thirty seconds ago."





A Department of Letters and Comment

TERRIFIC SEQUEL

Dear RWL:

Re SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY, November, '56 issue:

The lead novelet, "Deus Ex Machina" impressed me as a terrific sequel to Randall's previous, "No Future In This". In fact, I thought it was even better! The writing seemed so smooth and polished. Oh, well, I guess when two competent writers like Garrett and Silverberg, go into collaboration, a story has to be good. Man—what I would give to be in Silverberg's shoes!

Jackson Barrow's (who is he?) "The Little Giant" actually fascinated me. And you can take my word—it is extremely rare when a short story fascinates Marty Fleichman. I actually felt that I was in the story; I felt I was living the role of the principal character; I could hear the key turn in the massive door; I could... All this, sir, is

the mark of a great, new writer! However, there is one thing: "The Little Giant" wasn't what I'd classify as true-blue science fiction. More a fantasy yarn.

Isaac Asimov, a man who seems to be appearing quite frequently in your magazines, had a highly readable short story in "The Last Question". Said story was a bit easy to foretell, but held my interest all the way. Leave it to Asimov to write a fine story.

The other shorts, with the exception of "Calculated Risk", which was the only one that I didn't enjoy, were what I'd call average stories, nothing more.

If there's one odd fact about SFQ, it's the large number of weird illustrations scattered throughout. Take the one on page 85 for example: Now just what did that illustrate, huh? Incidentally, the "flying saucer" cartoon was swell.

Aw, what are all the readers complaining about the advertising for, anyhow? Don't

they remember the ads in *PLANET STORIES* about six or seven years ago? You won't believe this, but I once counted 16 "*Lonely*" ads in 5 pages! So go easy on the ads, fellows.

Egad! I suddenly realized that there wasn't one letter from a femme-fan in the lot! Horrors!

You forgot to answer my question, Mr. Lowndes—are you or are you not giving out original illustrations for the best letters anymore? Well, if you are, give 'em to (1) Robert W. Lowndes (well, you were in the letter column)... Seriously, when I heard about Fletcher Pratt's decease, a few months back, I was shocked. When he died, not only science-fiction lost a great man but the world. (2) Victor Endersby (3) Thomas Gordon. I won't say I deserved an illo, because I didn't. One can't win just by rating the stories. Oh, well, maybe when I'm older.

I myself, Mr. Lowndes, can't get around to blame any one group for the "Fall". It was simply something that had to come about. To supply the ever increasing demand, writers were forced to take out their old, rejected manuscripts and submit them to the editors. The editor had no choice but

to accept the story, no matter how mediocre it was. Therefore, people just got disgusted and said to hades with science-fiction.

Contests? Well, why not run a cover contest. If I remember correctly, *OTHER WORLDS* ran one in '51. There was also a story contest around the cover, I think. Why not have one of them? Lots of new talent can be discovered that way. That's the way some famous authors were discovered, you know...

This portion of my missive is dedicated to Mr. Don Dixon: Just because you didn't agree with Kenn Curtis, you didn't have to call him an idiot. And the way you said it: "Kenn Curtis strikes me as an idiot, because I don't like his ideas of letter-writing." Hoo boy!

Mr. Dixon: That the fact that Campbell's letter column serves a purpose is granted, but Kenn merely said he wasn't interested. For that matter, neither am I. You think I understand all that stuff about psionic machines... whatever that is. (Oh, well, comes the Convention, I'll find out what it is. I hear Mr. Campbell's bringin' one along.)

At this time, I think it would be very appropriate for me to tell you what I think

Good News!



The response that you have given to our last couple of issues of **FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION** has justified our heeding the requests of those of you who have urged us to return to a regular schedule. Thus, with Issue Number 31, **FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION** will be a quarterly magazine.

Watch for our Winter 1956-57 number, Issue Number 31; it will feature a new complete short novel by **CLIFFORD D. SIMAK**, and short stories by **ROBERT SILVERBERG**, **THOMAS N. SCORTIA**, and many others.

are some of your better stories. Here are a few: "No Future In This," "Deus Ex Machina," "One of Them," "The Little Giant," "Man Who Left Paradise," "Wyvernhold", and "Think no Evil". Oh, yes—here's one that not one fan is going to agree with me about—"Elected" by George H. Smith. I don't recall ever disliking one of his stories.

As Kent Moomaw says: "Y'know, SFQ may uphold the glorious tradition of pulps yet." I think it will!

MARTY FLEISCHMAN, Bronx, N. Y.

The "weird illustrations" of which you complain are what are termed "spot cuts" and are used to fill little "holes" in the magazine. They aren't supposed to illustrate any particular story; if you take a look, you'll find that the spot cut is a rather general magazine practice.

See the comment on Kent Moomaw's letter for the answer to your question about original illustrations for the writers of the best letters.

EXPLANATION

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Dr. Macklin's last article helped clarify my conception of the square-cube law and unsanforization in general, principally by eliminating the necessity of asking such questions as: will shortening of the interneural paths result in a saner, quicker thinking, higher-type, better living individual or drive him batty? Which will he die of first, leukemia and tissue breakdown as a result of the proportionately greater concentration of body radiation, or gradual constriction of the heart muscle due to decreasing electrical potential in relation to surroundings? Will the votes of five of him count for three ordinary men in primaries; and does Little Orphan Annie need contact lenses?

I never read "The Ultimate Paradox," but if Dr. Severance increased his volume continually without mass addition it seems that eventually, perhaps before he reached his superuniverse, his atoms—in order to balance the proportionately increasing volume—would be attaining the speed of light, and Dr. Severance would find himself—as a result of the expansion—a body of no dimensions at all and infinite mass.

It's all a little disappointing though, as everybody has to give out a little silliness

once in a while; and maybe the ultimate silliness is in treating it seriously.

DON DIXON, New Britain, Conn.

Your letter was passed on to Dr. Macklin, who thanks you and adds, in reference to letters received, "I particularly enjoyed Don Dixon's remarks, and think he has something there—an explanation of how Dr. Severance was able to meet himself coming back."

FOR BROOKLYNITES

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

In addition to its excellent stories, your November issue held a special interest for me, as I was the subject of Bob Madle's write-up called "The Return of The Time Traveller." Needless to say, I enjoyed this chronicle of my past antics; and I appreciate its publication.

However, the point of this letter is to endorse your remark on Page 84 of that issue: "One would think that a city the size of New York would have one large science fiction club in each borough, at least. Strangely, this has never been the case..."

More than twenty years ago when I lived in The Bronx, I helped organize a s-fan club called The Scienceers, as related by Bob Madle. Now, as a resident of Brooklyn, I'd be glad to form a similar group in this borough. Anyone interested may write me at 241 Dahill Road, Brooklyn 18, N.Y., or phone GE 6-0666.

ALLAN GLASSIER

MOOMAW, SPEAKING FOR CURTIS

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I picked up the November SFQ a day or two ago, immediately thumbed through to the letters, and thereupon noticed Don Dixon's brief but biting evaluation of Kenn Curtis. As a rule, I wouldn't rise to the defense of just any letterhack whose opinions meet with disfavor, but this is a situation which requires me to do so. You see, I know Kenn Curtis very well; in fact, I've lived with him for about fifteen years. To be exact, Kenn Curtis and Kent Moomaw are really the same person....me!

Don begins his letter with highly illogical statement in itself: "Kenn Curtis..."

strikes me as an idiot because I don't like his idea of letter writing." My, my, does everyone whose opinions differ from Don's strike him as being of sub-level intelligence? Must be an awful lot of idiots running around loose. Next we come to a pair of highly conflicting statements, as in the former he says that I am treading on people's toes when I get down to issues, while in the latter he wants me to express myself more clearly. Confusing, to say the least.

Don, would you please point out to me in any of my letters anywhere a place where I say that letter columns aren't any good? I buy some magazines on the basis of their letter columns alone, and write to a great number of them. If I didn't like letter columns, why in the name of Gernsback would I be writing in to them? It seems that you've misunderstood my statements. Here is what I meant to say in the May SFQ: although I am a hearty advocate of letter columns in prozines, I do have criticisms of some of them, as you no doubt have of things you like or enjoy. I think that the majority of letters in ASTOUNDING do not serve a purpose; they simply provide so-called undiscovered geniuses a place to

spout off. Has anything come out of that "highway suiciders" discussion? Nope, not a thing but a lot of dull mumbblings by would-be intellectuals. This kind of thing does not belong in a letter section in the proportion that John Campbell sees fit to print. ASTOUNDING has some of the best scientific articles in any science fiction magazines, and this is the place for qualified people to put forth definite and concrete suggestions or opinions.

I am of the whole-hearted opinion that if SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY and other science fiction magazines altered their letter sections so that they matched that type of letters, most of the people who are now interested in what fans and hacks have to say would quickly lose it. In minority, balanced with the fannish (which I must confess I like best, an opinion I am fully entitled to hold without fearing accusations of being a candidate for a padded cell) type of letter, the story discussion type of letter, the violently critical type of letter, and the goshwowboyoboy type of letter, it is all right. Campbell uses little now, but, if you'll look back at old issues you'll find the other types I've mentioned.

[Turn To Page 84]

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The master of the pin-up, Peter Gowland, reveals his secrets how to dress, undress, light and pose your models, with 100 photographs clothed and unclothed of the most beautiful models in the U.S. Contains everything you need to know about girls, cameras, film. Become an expert photographer of women, a well paying profession. **Book No. 32 \$2.00**

BODY CONTROL

by Herman Gower

You can build a powerful physique at home by following simple body building exercises in just 15 minutes a day. Will give you powerful arms and legs, build biceps, increase chest expansion, a trim figure, flat stomach. You'll feel, look, and act like a real HE-MAN, and find it easy to win women and men friends, praise and popularity. **Book No. 34 \$2.00**

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A Positive Approach for Success

The universal power that flows through your mind, says the author, Fred P. Corson, knows no limitations. You need only to unlock this power to sweep toward new horizons. Joy, Success, Love, Achievement are all about ready for the taking—if you have the key. This book offers the key to that mysterious something in you that will make your life richer and greater. **Book No. 40 \$2.00**

AMERICAN COMBAT JUDO ILLUSTRATED

133 photographs illustrating instructions in jiu-jitsu, foot fighting, police tactics, commando fighting—written by the author—expert who was twice Big-Ten wrestling champion, and who perfected new fighting methods for the U.S. Army. **Book No. 41 \$1.00**

HOW TO HYPNOTIZE

by Konrad Leitner

Now for the first time the real secrets of hypnotism are revealed. The mental processes of both hypnotist and subject are bared so that the student can understand what really goes on. He need no longer imitate blindly but really know and understand why. Helpful in business and social life. **Book No. 46 \$2.00**

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Over 100 Illustrations and Foot Print Diagrams are included in this self-instruction course for popular ballroom dances. Fox-trot—Rumba—Samba—Lindy Hop—Truckin'. A beginner can easily master all popular dance steps in his own room. The more advanced can improve greatly. **Book No. 35 \$1.00**

THE LIFE OF THE PARTY

72 Sure-Fire Ways of Having Fun

by Menaker and Folsom

Written by two experts who spent many years creating and perfecting games that are interesting, lively and intelligent. With this repertoire of games your hostess will be eternally grateful and you will always get an invitation to the next party because of your ability, and nack of being the life of the party. **Book No. 42 \$1.00**

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR EYESIGHT

Thousands are now being helped to better sight by the Hates Method—a helpful 5-minute-a-day healing method of relaxing the eyes which brings better vision. Thousands who wore glasses for years now read watch TV, movies without glasses. **Book No. 43 \$.300**

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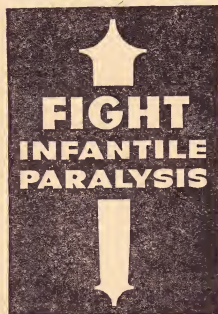
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MARCH OF DIMES



JANUARY 2-31

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

No, Don, I don't think I'm an idiot; in fact, I think lots of readers would agree with me.

Sorry I can't quote some ancient philosophers to back up my opinions; I'm sure you'd be more willing to listen to them than to me. And Bob, I would personally buy up every copy of SFQ in the local stands and rip it apart page by page if you ever turned "It Says Here" into a Sarge Saturn kind of department! That would be almost worse than the stuffy pseudo-technical type! I see that Paul Fairman's trying to do that by beginning a "Space Club" in AMAZING STORIES, and I'm just about ready to start sticking pins in a voodoo doll like Matty in "A Prideful Thing", because of it.

I was most gratified that Marty Fleischman picked me for an original illo, but now that you're no longer passing out artwork, it really didn't have much material value. Would you please explain why SFQ is no longer giving out art to letter hacks? Since PLANET STORIES has folded and SFQ has dropped the practice, none of the current magazines pass out artwork, and this frustrates a number of hacks, I am sure. Howcum?

Though Dixon may not like such trivia, I'll rate the stories in this issue as follows: 1) "Deus Ex Machina" by Bob Silverberg and Randall Garrett; 2) "Calculated Decision" by Algis Budrys; 3) "The Last Question" by Isaac Asimov; 4) "Dog Star" by Mack Reynolds; 5) "A Prideful Thing" by M. C. Pease; 6) "The little Giant" by Jackson Barrow. Reynolds seems to me the master of the science fiction short-short, which rates his tiny tale that high. Asimov's short stories have been slipping lately, though they continue to pull cover assignments and lead positions on the Asimov reputation alone. Garrett and Silverberg continue to set a burning pace; out of their four Robert Randall novelettes, all have clicked solidly. Budrys appears back on the beam after his novelette in February's SFQ. Pease still writes well, though his byline is so infrequent. Barrow... well, it was a first story, I think.

KENT MOOMAW, Cincinnati, Ohio

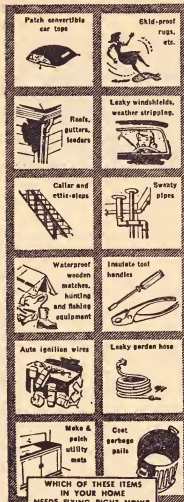
You can't have an election without ballots, Kent. The reason why both "The

[Turn To Page 86]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

Reckoning" and the letters sweepstakes was dropped was that so few votes were received that no selection could be made. And the small number of letters noticing that those departments had been dropped seem to clinch our feeling that there was scant interest in them.



WONDER FOUND

Dear Editor:

The other day, having nothing else to do, I drifted down to the local second hand store to look for back issues of science fiction magazines. They had only one: **SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY**, May 1953.

I have just finished reading both the November 1956 and the May 1953 issues. In some matters (different type, better illustrations) your magazine has improved; in other matters (departments such as "The Reckoning" have disappeared, the best letters are no longer selected, and the number of pages is less) it has faltered.

Your November issue was the best of the 1956 group. Asimov's story, "The Last Question", gave me such a "sense of wonder" that I cannot describe it. After reading it, I just had to pause and think. I can honestly proclaim that it is the best science fiction story I have yet read.

Good deal—more Father Riley! Garrett and Silverberg have it; these Father Riley stories have one of the most interesting character portrayals captured by any writer.

There was only one story that I did not enjoy, and that was "Dog Star" by Reynolds. His work is usually better. I'm afraid that I'm inclined to agree with Marty Fleischman—I do not seem to enjoy any of de Camp's work.

In case this sees print, I would like to inform all teenage fans that I am starting

[Turn To Page 88]

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BALL CLINIC, Dept. 62, Excelsior Springs, Mo.

a teenage fanzine, and wish to receive material from teenagers. If anyone is interested, send mail to the address below.

EDWARD GORMAN, Jr.,
119 1st Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids,
Iowa.

It looks as if you'll have to hold the fort alone, Ed, because Fleischman has deserted; as you saw in his letter, he lists deCamp's "W'yvernhold" among his favorites in recent months.

STIMULATED

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Although a science fiction fan of some ten years standing, I've never before written to an editor of a science fiction magazine. My only contact with fan letters has been in reading all the columns, chuckling over some, frowning in disagreement with others, and nodding in concord with still others. However, Robert Randall's "Deus Ex

Machina" has so whetted my curiosity that I just have to write or succumb to that age-old affliction.

With the possible exception of "The Lovers", I don't think I've seen a story so loaded with controversial dynamite in years. I have a feeling that this won't be the only letter arriving over your desk in response to it. I'm by no means an expert on theology, but as a Protestant turned Catholic and still further, agnostic, the implication of the story seemed quite clear to me. Perhaps Randall didn't intend it this way at all, but it seems that he had the priest—in his decision for the "True Faith"—argue against, and almost condemn, the basic tenets of the Church. This despite the good Farther's arguments with Jerry Stein in the first part of the story. Indeed, that seemed to me to be a masterful stroke of writing on Randall's part, to refresh the readers' memories about the stonewall rigidity of

[Turn To Page 90]

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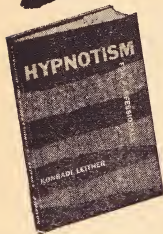
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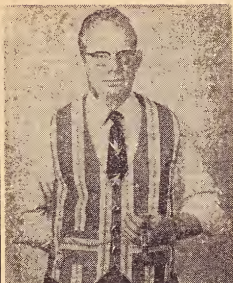
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

Catholic law (awaiting the decision of Rome, etc). Even though everything seems to point to the answer, here's the question: Did Randall actually intend the story as a discourse as to the relative merits of Catholicism versus Protestantism, complete with conclusion?

The second question more directly concerns you, Mr. Editor. As a journalist of exceedingly small note, it has always been my impression that there is an unwritten tabu against anything with such potential controversy in a popular publication. A tabu you've seem to have busted high, wide, and handsome. Was it because you felt that good science fiction shouldn't be bound by outmoded conventions, or was it perhaps a desire to shock some readers off their intellectual dead duffs and stimulate some letters, as in my case?

I don't know what merit this letter might have for publication, if any, but the story was stimulating to me and I would like to see more of a similar nature.

JOHN A. TURNER, USN
CLARIFICATION

Dear Bob:

Thanks for the chance to look at John Turner's letter. The part addressed to you, as editor, we'll leave to your tender mercies, but the section that applies directly to the story itself shall be, as you said, taken care of by the authors.

No, the point in "Deus Ex Machina" was *not* a discussion of the relative merits of Protestantism versus Catholicism. And Father Riley did *not* argue against or condemn the basic tenets of the Roman Catholic Church.

Granted, it looks suspicious; anyone not thoroughly cognizant of the teachings of the Church might readily assume that the comparisons of the One Belief and the True Faith made the Church look bad in the long run. I think Mr. Turner's objections—if objections they be—stem from the relative strengths of the priesthood in the two alien faiths. The priests of the One Belief held that it was impossible to worship unless there was a priest handy, while those of the True Faith said that when impossible for the believer to come to the temple, it was permissible to worship at home.

[Turn To Page 92]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

The latter happens to be the teaching of the Roman Church. Anyone familiar with the Sacramental System of the Church will know that there are two sacraments—Baptism and Matrimony—which can be performed by laymen. In fact, Matrimony, as a sacrament, can *only* be performed by the couple being married. Three more can be performed by any priest of the Apostolic Succession: Absolution, Unction, and the Eucharist. Holy Orders and Confirmation can *only* be performed by a Bishop.

However—if a Catholic finds himself a thousand miles from the nearest priest, he is permitted—nay, required—to keep the Sabbath by devout prayer, which does not, and never did require the presence of a priest.

Now, the whole point of the story was the *relative* power of the two priesthoods. The One Belief priests had become so powerful that they insisted that no worship was any good unless there was a priest present. Those who could not attend the temples not only did not keep the Cothlani equivalent of the Sabbath, they were *forbidden* to do so. And that is not Christian teaching—whether Catholic or Protestant; nor is it Judaic teaching.

"Deus Ex Machina" was not propaganda either for or against Catholicism, Protestantism, nor for or against Judaism. It was, purely and simply, an exercise in applied anthropology and mob psychology; a problem which was solved by the application of a theological consideration common to all three of the major religions in the United States.

Sincerely,

ROBERT RANDALL

In our letter section for August, 1956, Ralph Ashley answered your question when he said, in part, "...if we are going to have believable portrayals of the possible future, then surely every aspect of our lives should be considered, insofar as they are legitimate material for fiction. ...surely, then, when today the Church plays a vital role in the lives of many, her role in tomorrow should not be ignored."

Discourses on the relative merits of real religions has no place in this magazine, and while we welcome an occasional story wherein theological consideration of various problems may occur, we must be satisfied

[Turn To Page 94]

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that the author knows whereof he speaks. Nor can theology be the sole basis for a story. SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY is not the first to run such stories, as the MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION has presented several in past years, as did IF, with James Blish's "Case of Conscience", and INFINITY with Arthur C. Clark's "The Star." And Robert Hugh Benson's classic science fiction novel "The Lord of the World", originally written before the first World War, has just been reissued.

FEATURE FOLLOWER

Dear RWL:

Well anyway I buy your magazines. I've got a somewhat virgin backlog of eight SFQ's, along with many issues of your other publications, awaiting scrutiny. I say "somewhat" because I've dipped into them to the point of reading your editorials, book reviews special features, and Madle's column. Neither the voice of Ghung Ghung the lizard god or CONFIDENTIAL have warned me away from the fiction. None of your writers owe me money. It's just that with treks to the West Coast plus nine months at the University (Mo.) the days, even the years, slip by leaving much unread science fiction in their wake. There are occasional weekends tho, relatively beardless womenless and moneyless, when the psych tale begins to wear and I take up a mag. With Damon Knight and RWL available, your authors suffer; that's right, I'm one of those strange ones who you sell via way of features.

Most editors will tell you that we rank with the Dodo bird; if they're pushed a little, they're likely to say that unicorn more effectively symbolizes our existence (or lack of it). What about all the magazines lacking special feature departments? Well, the fact that they exist in such numbers means they're reaching an audience; that I don't happen to be one of these isn't particularly important. Their editors are, quite understandably, more interested in paying the rent than in catering to my tastes; and that's more or less indicative of my feelings toward the pros. Sure I hollered once...loudly and uselessly...than began to see that tho Joe Pro had published miserable science fiction he probably, fairly frequently, wouldn't be a bad fellow to

[Turn To Page 96]

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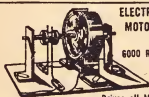
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

bend an elbow at the bar with. After seven years I've got a pretty good idea as to which magazines are worthwhile (my opinion of course) and which of them are trying to imitate the SATURDAY EVENING POST or impress the literary savants.

Instead of rising in useless, howsoever righteous, wrath I simply avoid purchasing the magazines which displease me. PASSIVE resistance? To be sure... just because I can appreciate the necessity of making compromises with commercialism (Ex Editors sometimes don't eat well.) doesn't mean I'm compelled to kick in for baby's new shoes.



One of the reasons I don't write in often-er is that you usually say it for me in your editorials (as Damon does in his column). If I devote paragraphs to shooting your ideas back to you in slightly (very) re-vised form you're unlikely to gain much from the exchange. Take this Bloch attack on "we" who are guilty of applauding the popularization of science fiction. the first thought that struck me after finishing the article was that guilt by association was being carried to the Nth degree. I was still somewhat native about certain science fic-tion matters at the time of the big push but I know I didn't think it was "such a wonderful thing" even then.

Since that time I've come to possess certain opinions on the great drive for recog-nition. One goes something like this: Ever notice the agonized attempts to gain "acceptance" which have and are being made by specific stf people? Acceptance by the general public and, as Bloch puts it, "editors and critics in the mainstream of contemporary letters." It seems to me that such attempts are a huge waste of time as well as being down right ridiculous. I've al-ways been vaguely annoyed by people going around demonstrating their "maturity," whether by refusing to admit they read anything besides the "safe" classics or by other means.

[Turn To Page 98]

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I'm not concerned with impressing the general public or the literary critics. You might find me reading a comic book, or *Dialogues of Plato*, but one thing is sure; I won't be apologizing for either. I enjoy *Flash-Gordon* as a change of pace and am not at all inclined to protest to friends (or enemies) that this isn't what I mean by science fiction. If they are so mentally confined as to, in a manner of speaking, dismiss a book because of its cover—so be it. They're the type who used to claim that that story *couldn't* be any good because it was published in a pulp magazine and just look at that paper...

The "mind of the general public" seems to run more to TEARSTAINED ROMANCES or hadn't you noticed Bob (Bloch that is)? So I should lose sleep over whether this same public regards science fiction as comic book hogwash or not? "...but the friends jeered"...I find that loaded with psychological significance. Why is it so important whether or not the friends jeered? I can fully understand adolescent concern with approval of the peer group, but adulthood seemingly carries with it the right—nay, obligation—of reaching some conclusions without society's assistance. Could this be a symptom of something or other in mid-twentieth century life Bob... or are Reisman and I barking up the wrong tree? Bloch, further, doesn't seem to realize that these friends may just not possess a "particular type of imagination" as you aptly put it.

"...sex, sadism and Little Ronnie the Boy who wants with All His Heart To See Mars..." Well we've plenty of Ronnie

(along with sweet old ladies who befriend Martians) but sex and sadism... Where? To this observer, it appears that science fiction is almost obscenely sexless. You don't have to be a strict Freudian to realize that sex in science fiction just isn't. Magazine tabus notwithstanding, you can't make me believe that come 1980 nobody will want to go to bed with anybody and that we'll have forgotten all our four-letter words and not invented any new ones. The day of the cardboard character didn't end with the decline in numbers of mad scientists. The "people" in science fiction will continue to appear as phony as a seven dollar bill until they wake up to the fact that in any sizeable group there is bound to be *somebody* more interested in the fact that there are two sexes than in talking lab gibberish.

Referring to movies it occurs to me Bob that there have been a few good quality movies *Period*. And just what proportion do they bear to the number of low grade and moronic films?

The amazing thing isn't that we had so many cruddy stf movies; the really amazing thing is that we had *one* "Day the Earth Stood Still!"

One last thought on mainstream critics; I'll always remember the one-paragraph "review" devoted to a well received recent novel by a contemporary critic. He pronounced the novel absolutely worthless. His reason: "It contains several flagrant examples of adultery." Maybe Bloch is concerned with impressing such people... I'm not.

PAUL KALIN, Columbia, Mo.

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